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**GET THE  
COTTAGE  
LOOK!**  
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Photo by Rick Hammer,  
courtesy Lands End Development

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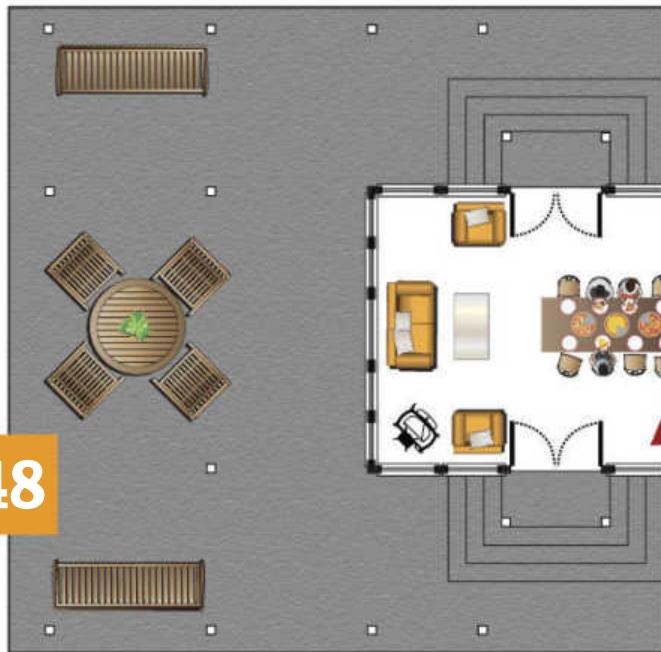
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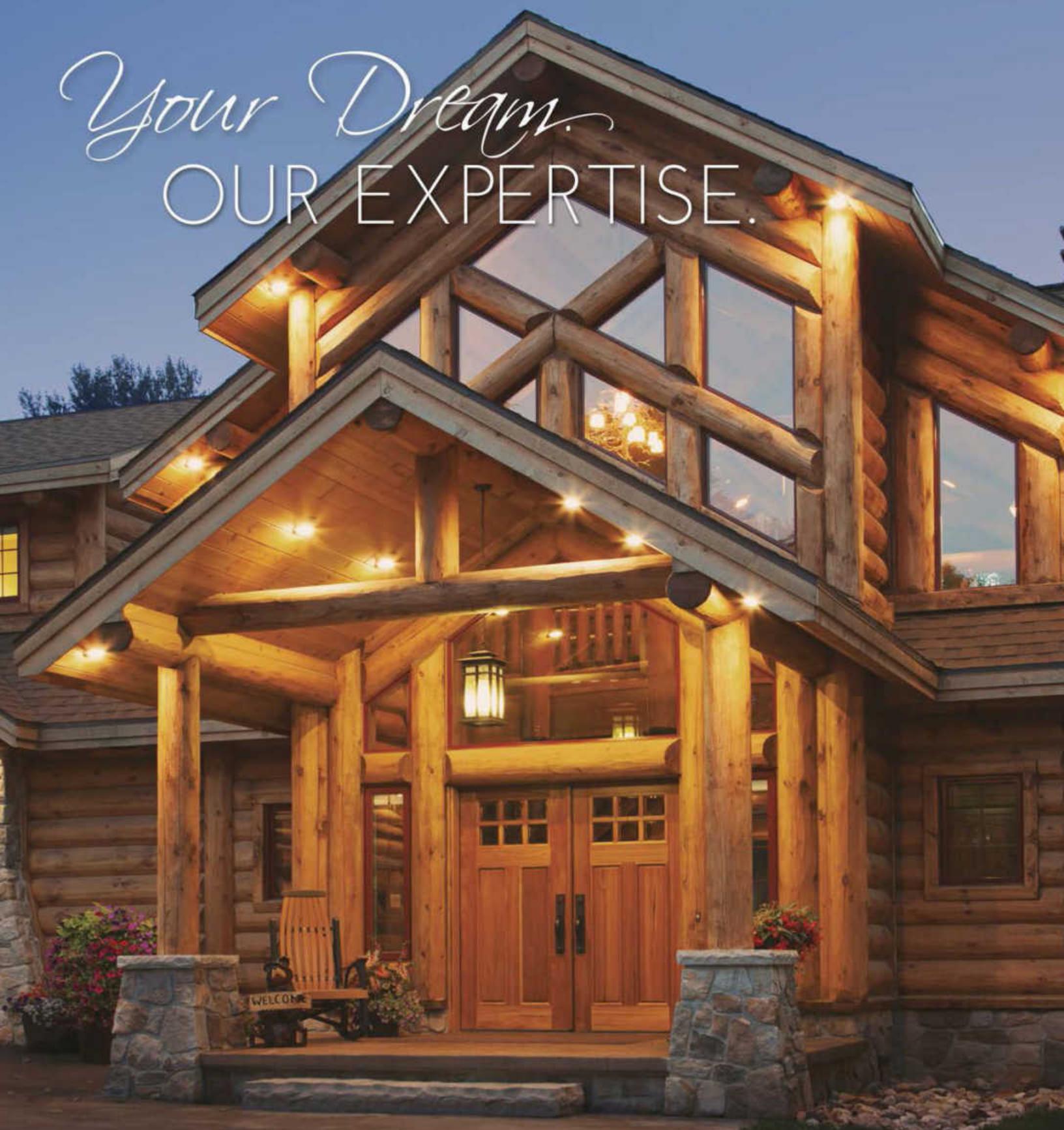
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welcome

# The Genesis of a Dream



Dear Readers,

Sometimes it seems like the stories in *Cabin Living* are like my children – in that I can't pick a favorite.

I am, however, especially excited about the new human interest stories that we started publishing this year. In the last issue, we brought you “A Cabin’s Purpose,” the story of author W. Bruce Cameron’s cabin life in northern Michigan.

And in this issue, check out “Cabin Passion Personified,” p. 30. It’s written by longtime contributor Paul Sullivan, one of our best storytellers. In this story, Paul interviewed four cabin enthusiast families to find out what sparked their interest in the cabin lifestyle.

Do you ever stop and reflect upon where your cabin passion began?

For me, it all began at three locations in northern Minnesota. My grandpa Art and grandma Mary owned a small, turquoise-green cottage on the Gull Lake chain near Nisswa, Minn. I remember riding in the car near the cabin on a winding, hilly road that felt like a roller coaster. I also knew we were getting close to the cottage when the road signs announced Robinhood Way and Nottingham Road, as this area was known as Sherwood Forest.

And my grandpa Ernie and grandma Norah rented a cabin every summer at a rustic resort called Tom’s Rest Haven on Snowbank Lake near Ely, Minn.

To this day, the fun times at the little

green cottage and the rustic rental cabin are part of my family’s treasured memories. And I learned important outdoor skills from my grandparents, like how to bait a fishing hook and how to properly fell a dead tree.

Lastly, my childhood Boy Scout troop owned a cabin on Fish Lake north of Duluth, Minn. From spring through fall, we slept in tents outside the cabin, but in the winter we slept on bunks inside. I remember that the adult leaders were very good at teaching us to take responsibility and work as a team. “Hey, it’s freezing in here! Whose turn is it to stoke the woodstove?”

Year-round, all of us scouts – organized into patrols of five to seven boys – cooked our own meals on grates over wood fires. We learned the hard way to keep our meal planning simple and appropriate for the season. For the record, it is *not* advisable for boys to attempt to grill pork over a wood fire on a -20°F late afternoon in January.

So, where did your cabin dream begin? Your *Cabin Living* editors would love to hear from you! Please email us: [cabinliving@aimmedia.com](mailto:cabinliving@aimmedia.com).

Wishing you more great times at the cabin,

MARK R. JOHNSON  
Editor

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Photo by Rick Hammer, courtesy Lands End Development

# COTTAGE STYLE

*Cabin styles vary greatly – from Adirondack to cottage to rustic to western and more. Cottage style is as popular as ever, and beadboard and shiplap are an enduring part of the cottage look. Turn the page to read more!*

**we asked  
you answered**

**WHAT DO YOU CALL YOUR PLACE?**

Cabin 56%

Lake home 21%

Cottage 12%

Camp 6%

Lodge 1%

Other 5%

# from the deck

## DESIGN & DÉCOR



For the love of  
beadboard  
& shiplap



To see more photos of this  
cottage, go to [www.CabinLivingMag.com/Dream-Cabins/Featured-Cabins/Beadboard-Cottage](http://www.CabinLivingMag.com/Dream-Cabins/Featured-Cabins/Beadboard-Cottage)



**ABOUT THIS COTTAGE:** Sitting beside Leech Lake in northern Minnesota, this retreat features a 432-square-foot main floor and a 216-square-foot loft. The cottage has a distinctive style. According to Krystal Lutgen, interior designer with the builder, Lands End Development, "Incorporating different elements such as beadboard and shiplap lends this space a fresh, layered continuity. Paired with the warmth of the window and door trim, as well as the wood flooring, the beadboard and shiplap create an open, balanced and relaxing atmosphere."

**RESOURCE:** Lands End Development, [landsenddev.com](http://landsenddev.com)

The cover of this issue of *Cabin Living* features a northern Minnesota cottage, which is also pictured on the preceding page and above. As shown in the interior photos, the vertical lines of beadboard and, similarly, the horizontal lines of shiplap can lend interest to walls that give spaces a textured cottage look.

The tongue-and-groove installation of beadboard and shiplap make for the less formal look of many coastal and farmhouse-style cottages. Shiplap in particular lends a nautical vibe to walls because the horizontal lines suggest boat hulls and decks, which traditionally use the often rough-hewn planks. Painting beadboard or shiplap in white or light colors helps bring out their texture, as light and shadow play on the planks and grooves, says Bob Muckle, partner at American Beadboard, which sells wood and medium-density fiberboard (MDF) panels and molding. Beadboard can be used on

walls, kitchen islands, cabinets, wainscoting, in bedrooms and as headboards on beds, in bathrooms and surrounding tubs, and on ceilings.

Providence, R.I., interior designer Kate Jackson uses shiplap to bring in what she calls a "beachy look" and to lend a more casual vibe in bedrooms and other less formal spaces, especially in second homes. White and light colors help bring in the light from waterfront cottages, but she has found that using dark paint can also be useful, depending on the desired mood and effect. "In a bathroom with an equestrian feel, we painted it a charcoal grey, which dressed it up a little," she says. "In that case, with an antique trough as the sink, a really cool faucet mounted in the wall, and a gilded lamp, the dark grey wall gave it an instant formality."

Beadboard can be purchased a number of ways, including as traditional tongue-and-groove lumber. When installing these, a nail gun

is your friend, Muckle says. MDF is particularly useful in bathrooms and kitchens, or in homes that see a lot of moisture, because of their water-resistant nature.

Beadboard also comes in sheets, which can be found at places like Lowe's and Home Depot, that merely mimic the tongue-and-groove construction. Lastly, paintable beadboard wallpaper is available at specialty wallpaper shops and interior design showrooms.

"Because shiplap is commonly used in barns and sheds and outbuildings, it gives a room a more casual feel," Jackson says. "And with beadboard, too, the profile of each board partially overlaps, so the board next to it creates a channel that gives it shadow line effects, and dimensional movement. It's nice in smaller rooms because you can appreciate that when there aren't a lot of windows."

—Daphne Howland

**SOURCES:** American Beadboard, (888) 536-0002; Kate Jackson Interior Design, [katejacksondesign.com](http://katejacksondesign.com)

# Know Your Water Temperature

**March days tease us** and then remind us that winter is still around though growing weak. Spring will win the tug-of-war though, and we'll be out there fishing.

One of the most important things for you to know, if you want to catch fish, is the water temperature. Fish become more active and are more likely to take a properly presented bait when the water temperature is in the range they prefer. That range is also different for each species.

Most fish species are cold blooded, which means they do not and cannot control their internal body warmth. As a result, their metabolism is strongly influenced by the temperature of their surrounding environment.

Some fish finders will show you the water temperature or you can buy water temperature/depth gauges that attach to your fishing line or you lower into the water. You can also use an inexpensive thermometer, check on the internet or visit with other fishermen.

Experts can't seem to agree on what is the best water temperature range for different species of fish in different areas of the country because it can vary. The chart at right is still a good guideline for you to know at what water temperature fish become more active.

Knowing the water temperature, along with where fish are likely to be holding and at what depth, what baits they prefer and even how you work the bait, are all pieces of the puzzle that fit together to make a successful fishing trip.

*Larry Whiteley hosts the Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World Radio Show, [basspro.com](http://basspro.com).*



TEMPERATURE AT WHICH THEY BECOME MORE ACTIVE (IN DEGREES FAHRENHEIT)

| TYPE OF FISH     | TEMPERATURE AT WHICH THEY BECOME MORE ACTIVE (IN DEGREES FAHRENHEIT) |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Largemouth Bass  | 65 – 75                                                              |
| Smallmouth Bass  | 65 – 70                                                              |
| Rock Bass        | 70 – 74                                                              |
| White Bass       | 65 – 70                                                              |
| White Crappie    | 60 – 64                                                              |
| Black Crappie    | 71 – 75                                                              |
| Walleye          | 64 – 70                                                              |
| Yellow Perch     | 68 – 72                                                              |
| Bluegills        | 68 – 72                                                              |
| Channel Catfish  | 82 – 88                                                              |
| Flathead Catfish | 84 – 88                                                              |
| Brown Trout      | 56 – 66                                                              |
| Rainbow Trout    | 62 – 64                                                              |
| Steelhead Trout  | 55 – 60                                                              |
| Lake Trout       | 50 – 55                                                              |
| Chinook Salmon   | 55 – 58                                                              |
| Coho Salmon      | 55 – 58                                                              |



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from the deck



do you know your birds?

Photos by Michael Furtman

Can you tell a male magnolia from a male Canada warbler?

When you're ready, turn to page 13 for the answer.



WHAT'S TRENDING  
ON FACEBOOK?



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## Sparkling Wines for Early Spring

As daffodils poke out of the soil and gardens begin to birth a green carpet, our palates also yearn for something fresh and youthful. How does a flute of sparkling wine sound? There's no need to drop a lot of money on French Champagne as plenty of other wine regions around the world make a stunning sparkler. From Napa Bruts to Spanish Cavas, and a Franciacorta from Northern Italy, here are three sparkling wines that cost under \$30 a bottle. Hint: don't feel like you have to pair with caviar or oysters. Sparkling wines taste amazing with salty snacks like potato chips, bars of chocolate with sea salt, hard wedges of cheese, and even your favorite fresh-out-of-the-oven crispy cookie. Whether you uncork a bottle to entertain guests or relish a leisurely break, bubbly from lesser-known regions is the perfect fit.

—Kristine Hansen

### 1. 2011 Domaine Carneros by Taittinger Estate Brut Cuvee Sparkling Wine

Your palate will perk up with the wine's green-apple notes and toasty brioche flavors. The certified-organic grapes used to make this crisp bubbly are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

### 2. Segura Viudas Brut Cava, Catalunya, Spain

Elegant and flawless, this Cava is rich with green-apple notes preceded by a citrus bouquet before winding into a clean finish – ideal to sip before a meal or solo (without food).

### 3. 2009 Ricci Curbastro Franciacorta Extra Brut, Lombardy, Italy

The grapes in this wine – stemming from Northern Italy – are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, resulting in a nutty bouquet, stonefruit notes and a soft profile.



foto: iStockphoto.com/Nishihama photo

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## TINY HOUSE RESORT



With the tiny house craze sweeping the U.S., tiny house communities are often in the news. Why not a tiny house resort?

Tiny House Estates is a tiny house community at Traverse Bay Resort in Traverse City, Mich. The community was formed through a partnership of the resort and Wheelhaus, a manufacturer of small cabins based in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Tiny House Estates consists of 81 homesites available for tiny homes. Those who want to buy a homesite choose between two different Wheelhaus designs with the option to add an additional bunk house.

The 150-acre Traverse Bay Resort includes clubhouse, pool and spa, tennis courts, fitness center and is adjacent to the Grand Traverse Resort Spa & Casino.

**RESOURCES:** Traverse Bay Resort, [traversebayrv.com/tinylhouses](http://traversebayrv.com/tinylhouses); Wheelhaus, [wheelhaus.com](http://wheelhaus.com)

**Read a feature on tiny cabins on p. 44!**

## mail box

Dear *Cabin Living*,

As a longtime reader of your magazine, I was happy to see the update on your former writer Nancy Cain [Book review: "Against the Grain," Oct. 2015 issue]. I remember reading Nancy's first stories back in 2001, and I especially liked her wildlife articles. I read in your book review that she now runs a gluten-free food business and published a cookbook!

Well, I actually have an update for you: I recently discovered that my local co-op grocery sells frozen pizzas from Nancy's business. My favorite is the Nut-Free Pesto Pizza; it's delicious!

Marie Edstrom  
Hartland, Wis.



Your  
*Cabin Living*  
editors want to  
hear from you!  
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**STUDIO POTTER SHARON MOEN** (aka Falconfire Pottery) studied at Penn State and the University of Minnesota, but not to be a ceramic artist. Rather, she aspired to follow in the footsteps of science provocateurs such as Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. Along that way, she picked up clay and was never able to shake it loose.

Sharon began potting in earnest after earning a M.S. in ecology, having two daughters and moving to Duluth, Minn., where her talent was incubated at the Duluth Art Institute. Now, 20 years in, Falconfire has a cult following of collectors.

"Clay is a perfect medium for capturing nature's motion and magic," Sharon says. "The process of turning clay into a functional vessel echoes Earth's cycles and life as tempered by hope and fire. My background in ecology and time spent outdoors, especially in Minnesota's North Woods and around

Lake Superior, inspires my designs and my life."

Falconfire's utilitarian pots, such as "birchware" (shown here) and "looniness," are fashioned out of stoneware or porcelain then fired to volcanic temperatures.

Photos courtesy Sharon Moen



## TO SEE MORE OF SHARON'S WORK:

The best place to see Sharon's most recent work is on Facebook (Falconfire Pottery). For special orders, contact Falconfire by phone (218) 591-2568 or [falconfirepottery@gmail.com](mailto:falconfirepottery@gmail.com). Falconfire Pottery is available through Mealey's in Ely, Minn., the Waters of Superior gallery in Duluth, Minn., and Waters Edge Trading Co. in Lutsen, Minn.



answer

Both species nest in the northern forests of Canada, and migrate through the central and eastern parts of the U.S. They make the daunting, non-stop flight across the Gulf of Mexico twice each year. The Magnolia warbler winters in Central America, the Canada in South America.

Both males have bright yellow throats with black streaks on yellow breasts. The

Magnolia's streaks are longer, joined in a horizontal necklace. Note the white on the Magnolia's wings and head, black face mask, black beak, and gray-green legs.

Canada's have a white eye ring, yellow between the beak and eye, pale beak, unmarked wings, and yellowish legs.

— Michael Furtman  
[michaelfurtman.com](http://michaelfurtman.com)

# Modular Cabins

**Q** I am looking for info about prefabricated cabins made by reputable companies. Are these cabins – prebuilt in factories and then assembled on-site – as good as having a cabin built on-site from scratch? How do I find the companies, and who rates their reputations?

– Donna Miller, via email

**A** Modular or “kit” homes have served as second homes such as cabins and beach bungalows since their heyday in the U.S. in the early part of the 20th century. These days, improved logistics can make them a good choice for anyone who wants a log cabin or other kind of more rustic structure. Whether made from custom designs or predesigned plans, modular homes are built to specifications at a company’s factory and delivered to your site, where your contractor (or you yourself, if you have the right skills) can complete construction.

Modular log cabins can be an especially beneficial choice, says Brian Fisher, sales director at Woodtex, which delivers pre-fab cabins, barns, and other structures. “Definitely our niche is somebody who wants the look and feel of log home living for, in a lot of cases, a more affordable price,” says Fisher. “And our home is a lot more efficient because it can be hard to insulate a log cabin.”

Most modular cabin companies sell through dealers or contractors, while a few, like Blue Ridge Log Cabins in Campobello, S.C., sell direct to the consumer, who then employs a contractor to finish the job on site. That means you can check local listings for reputable dealers



Photos courtesy Blue Ridge Log Cabins



**Blue Ridge Log Cabins** is one manufacturer of modular or prefabricated cabin retreats. Blue Ridge offers custom log, non-log and hybrid homes. The model shown, part of the rustic Mountain Architecture series, is the River Rock II. It features a bedroom on the 642-square-foot main level, a second bedroom in the 160-square-foot loft and one bathroom. Its front porch and rear deck are site-built.

and contractors or contact the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), which maintains a directory.

Opting for a modular cabin can help keep you on schedule because there are fewer variables to hold up construction. “I think one of the biggest advantages to modular construction is the fact that it’s built indoors,” says Russ Marti, vice president and general manager at Stratford, Wis.-based Stratford Homes. “When we’re finished, it’s loaded on the carrier completely wrapped and delivered to the job site. So it’s completely protected, unlike a typical stick-built site, where walls are exposed to whatever Mother Nature throws at them.”

Another aspect of modular building that can speed up the process and help ensure quality is that much of the work, like interior finishes, fixtures, windows, and wiring, is also done at the factory. “The first floor is completely finished, with bathrooms, light fixtures, kitchen cabinets, granite counter parts,” says

Blue Ridge vice president of manufacturing Doug Terrell. Blue Ridge offers both log homes and a Mountain Architecture series (see photos above).

All the companies we spoke to sell modular cabins and cottages nationwide, and each cabin is designed to meet the building specifications and codes of the local states and cities where the delivery will be made.

Finally, banks and insurers will treat modular homes much like a stick-built home, though it pays to find agents and brokers that understand the financing, appraisal, and insurance of cabins in general and modular homes in particular. Sometimes your site will introduce variables, like well drilling and energy hook-ups, that could affect your financing and insurance costs more than the way in which your home is built.

In any case, working with a modular company can be an excellent alternative to stick-building a cabin, with more choices than you may realize. “They

**SOURCES:** National Association of Home Builders, [nahb.org](http://nahb.org); Blue Ridge Log Cabins, [blueridgelogcabins.com](http://blueridgelogcabins.com); Stratford Homes, [stratfordhomes.com](http://stratfordhomes.com); Woodtex, [woodtex.com](http://woodtex.com)

can be log cabins, chalets; we build a lot of rustic retreats with knotty pine log beams," Marti says. "We have a complete line of what we refer to as rustic retreats. The smallest is 800 square feet and the largest, 4,000 square feet."

**Q** I need some suggestions on a small cabin heater. We just purchased a 500-square-foot cabin on Devil's Lake, Wis. Our cabin has a liquid-propane heater, an old 1960s' model. When we had our inspection, I got a headache from the fumes it emitted! The previous owners said it was inspected recently, but I can't bring my family there with that smell! So do I get it inspected again? Rip it out and put in electric? All suggestions welcome.

—Greg Jeseritz, via Facebook

**A** One way to go is to simply replace the LP gas system you have. (Liquefied petroleum gas or liquid petroleum gas is also known as LPG or LP gas and is also commonly referred to as propane or butane.) "They still make room heaters like that, freestanding or wall-mounted versions, and the replacement would probably be quite a bit more efficient today," says Mike Luongo at Caldwell, N.J.-based Total Home Supply. "That's a viable option and not an expensive option."

As you note, though, there are alternatives to consider as long as you're replacing the old heater. Wood stoves can do well heating small cabins, but in an area where you need to keep pipes from freezing and bursting, it's not ideal because wood stoves must be regularly stoked. There are also now multizone LP systems that can heat more areas of the home than the one you have now and that

don't require the ductwork that traditional multizone heating systems do.

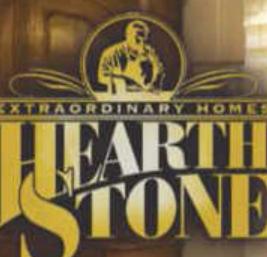
Finally, there are those hotel-style packaged terminal air conditioning units (PTACs) that are installed in walls to heat and cool large rooms.

Your choice depends on how the cabin is configured. If you have a lot of closed-off spaces, the multizone units may not work as well. Whatever the technology, electric-powered heaters are your most expensive option, by far, in the long run. A simple replacement of your LP unit will be 10 times more efficient than electric heat, according to Luongo.

Whatever you decide, though, it does sound like replacing the 1960s' model you have now will allow you to breathe easier — by sparing you those fumes, and by saving you some money on fuel costs, too. **CL**

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# finding serenity

*A little cabin in the woods*

STORY & PHOTOS BY ANNE GRUGEL

**L**ike many folks, it has been a lifelong dream of mine to own a little cabin in the woods. In October 2012, at 60 years young, my dream became a reality!

From my apartment in Syracuse, N.Y., I had spent many weekends driving north into Oswego, Oneida, Lewis and Madison Counties – the Tug Hill region – just to get away from the city. While I had always dreamed of owning a camp in the beautiful Adirondack region, the more familiar I became with Tug Hill, it struck me as a “mini Adirondacks” and certainly much more affordable. And so my quest began.

I tried working with an area Realtor who dealt specifically in camp properties, but we weren’t finding that “just-right” property. It took over four years to find my dream property. But then, there it was – I found it on Craigslist of all places! I met with the seller to look it over; little did he know that I’d been sneaking looks at that property for more than two years.

I gave the seller a deposit and closed on my little slice of heaven on October 25, 2012 – my dear mother’s birth date. So with tears of joy, and a most thankful heart, I walked my new property, and then closed the little cabin up for the winter.

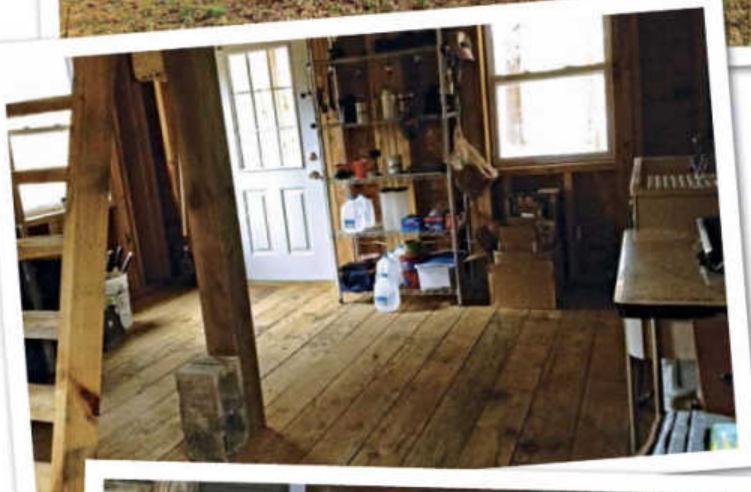
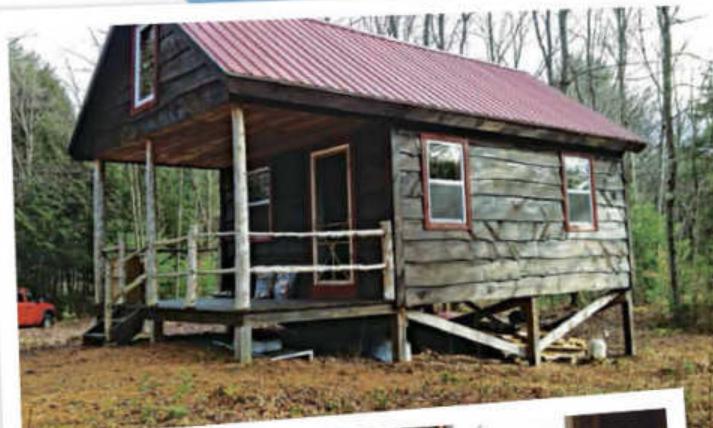
My tiny 20x16-foot cabin sits on 2.8 acres overlooking a fresh water pond with pond access. The pond is teeming with wildlife! It truly is more of a wetland in the summer months. I’ve seen and heard osprey, heron, wood duck, geese, beaver, owl, deer, dragonflies, butterflies, hummingbirds, chickadees, orioles, chipmunks, and squirrels. My blue bird and wood duck nest boxes are all set for spring, and my “Wildlife Sanctuary” signs are posted.

At night, the pond produces a loud chorus of bullfrogs, tree frogs, and owls. On a clear, starry night, I can sit in my canoe and attempt to count the stars reflecting in the pond water! What more could I ever hope for?

I have continued working both full and part time (70-plus hours per week) because I now have a 10-year cabin mortgage to pay, as well as saving for a few amenities at the cabin such as a hand-pump well, an outhouse, and a wood stove. By late spring 2013, the well and hand pump were in place, and by late summer the cabin had been power-washed and was newly stained.

In recent years, I have been working on my cabin in earnest. Major projects, some of which have involved my carpenter, have included:

- Evicting the resident mice, and keeping them out.
- Removing the R11 insulation and replacing it with R19.



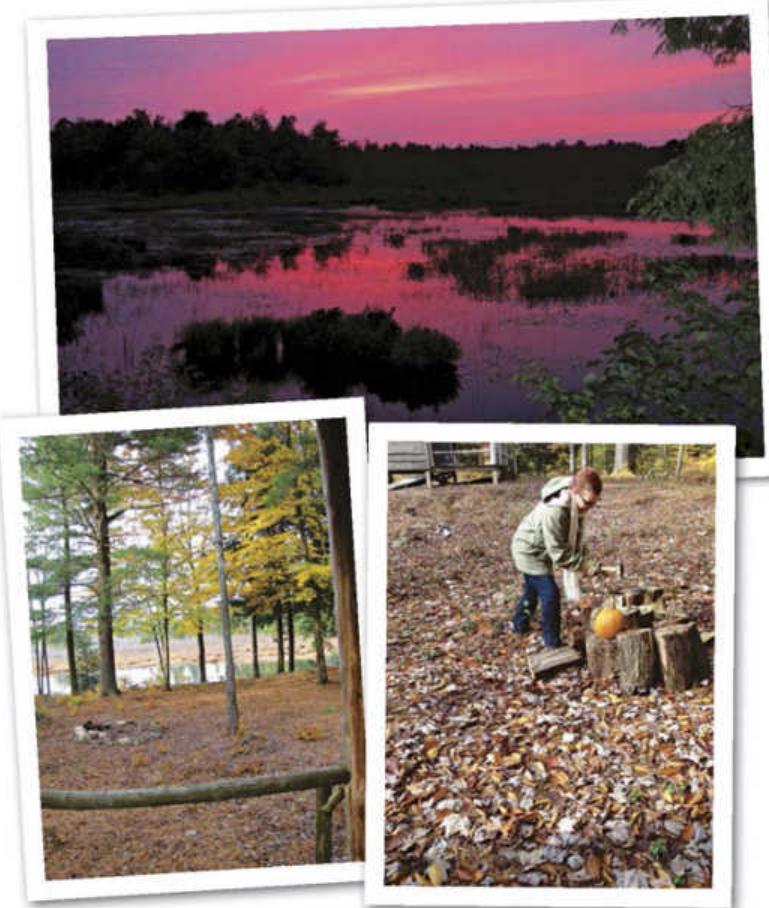
- Installing beautiful new tongue-and-groove paneling in the loft.
- Removing the batten board inside the main part of the cabin and replacing it with polyurethane-coated horizontal plank boards with dark green beadboard on the bottom and a dark red chair rail.
- Removing all the bark from every piece of exterior board, spraying for ants, and staining all the wood.

My carpenter is currently building an outhouse that he'll deliver in the spring. My well guy will dig the outhouse hole and line it with a plastic barrel with a concrete bottom. He is also in the process of installing a special sleeve on the hand pump so the water always drains out, and the pump won't freeze. Lastly, after much research, I have chosen a wood stove! It's on layaway at an area hearth shop to be installed by my carpenter in the fall of 2016.

Next summer, I will be moving back to my cabin. And this time I'll stay there! I keep envisioning how beautiful the cabin will look with the inside completed and the wood stove keeping it, and me, snug and cozy.

So what is it about my cabin that has me scrimping and saving and aching to live there? I can't speak for everyone, but since you're reading *Cabin Living*, you most likely have a yearning in your heart to simplify and find some serenity. Perhaps not to live there, but a place of quiet and beauty where one can come away from the hectic pace of our daily lives and rejuvenate our souls.

*Turn the page to read another "My Cabin"*



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# finally, a place to stay

*Our go-to place for relaxing*

STORY & PHOTOS BY TOM & BONNIE CROSBIE

**W**e had been campers for many years, finishing our camping career with a 40-foot diesel-pusher motorhome.

We were ready to leave the roaming around recreation for a cozy cabin on a lake for relaxation and fun.

We began our search like we assumed most cabin searchers did, by driving around the lake country looking for "For Sale" signs and by working with real estate agents that dealt in lake property. Our goal was to have a place within a short driving distance from our home in southern Minnesota. We wanted a seasonal place we could get to in less than an hour. That limited our search area, as well as what was actually available, but the challenge was exciting.

We found everything from ratty cabins to beautiful, year-round homes, but we weren't interested in either. We saw several that would do nicely but were too high priced. The more we looked, the braver we got. We would even go so far as to peek in windows of cabins that no one was occupying at that moment! We spoke with potential neighbors. Some would have made great neighbors, and some were grouchy and would have made lousy neighbors. Good neighbors became another important criteria! The search became something we found very enjoyable!

After almost two years of looking, we found a cozy 950-square-foot cabin exactly a half hour from home that we both really liked. It became the cabin to which we compared all others we found. We finally decided to make the owners an offer, and they accepted! We were about to become cabin owners!

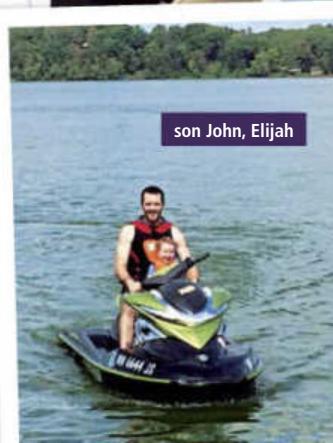
Closing day came, and we were now official lake cabin owners. We started cleaning, painting, updating and landscaping. We bought a new pontoon to park at the dock too. All that work didn't really seem like work at the lake!

We are now at the point where we can relax and enjoy early morning coffee by the calm, quiet lake, listening to all the noisy birds and watching Mr. Heron who, for some reason, likes our dock. Often, after our early morning coffee, we take the boat out for a slow, relaxing cruise around the lake.

We have been on the lake now for a few years and it remains our go-to place for relaxing, alone or with family, friends, and good neighbors. **CL**

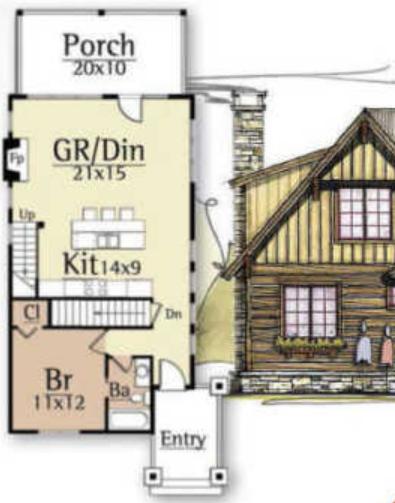
Shields Lake,  
Rice County

MINNESOTA

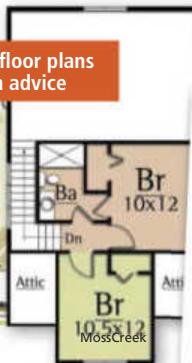


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**THIS PAGE:** This lake in northern Michigan is home to the author's cabin, on a beautiful but blustery day.

**FACING PAGE:** Clouds, wind, and waves make for a gorgeous photo op but not so much for a leisurely day of boating.

# Berenstain Boating

*What not to do when you're out on the water* **BY CHRISTY HEITGER-EWING**

**A**s a kid, I loved reading the “Berenstain Bears” books, and as a parent, I read them to my sons. I’ve gotten the biggest kick out of the fact that Papa Bear, in the process of teaching his son safety tips, always got himself into the most precarious predicaments.

One summer when I was 16 years old, I witnessed a “Berenstain Bears” story come to life right before my eyes. I’d spent the morning sunbathing on the dock, but as the afternoon clouds thickened, I hunkered down on the boat’s floorboard to stay warm. Over my blaring radio, I suddenly

heard a frantic shriek. I popped up and saw a 30-something-year-old woman in chest-deep water, flapping her hands hysterically while trying to corral her 19-foot boat. The engine wasn’t running, but her petite body was no match for the heavy winds and enormous waves, which turned her Bayliner into a gigantic bobber.

“Help!” she screamed as huge rollers pummeled her.

An older woman sat in the pilot’s seat, whimpering and white-knuckling the steering wheel.

I yelled for my dad, who ran down, jumped into the lake, and grabbed the

boat before it crashed into the neighbor’s dock.

“Christy, throw me a tie line, quick!” Dad hollered.

The air started to rumble and rain drops the size of globe grapes began falling. Dad secured the Bayliner to our buoy, then helped the two shaking women onto shore just as the skies opened up.

I draped beach towels around them. “Th-thank you s-s-so much! I’m Jill,” the younger woman stammered through chattering teeth. “And th-this is my mo-mother, Stella.”

Inside the cabin, Jill patted her face dry



and explained how she had just recently moved to town and purchased the boat.

"Was this your first time out?" I asked. Jill nodded.

"I live on the river," she replied. "I thought it would be fun to take Mom out on the lake, but it's so much bigger than I realized. I figured it would be easy to find my way home, but when the weather turned nasty, I got disoriented and couldn't locate the river mouth."

I thought back to my childhood when my own Papa Bear repeatedly quizzed me to be sure I recognized every point and important landmark on the lake. He made certain I could identify the weedy areas, the rocky spots, the sunken islands, and the sharp drop-offs, as well as local marinias, state parks, and river mouths. He wouldn't let me pilot the boat until I could prove that I knew my way around the lake and could find my way home.

"When the winds shifted, we suddenly found ourselves in shallow water, and I didn't know how to raise the motor," Jill said. "I panicked and hopped into the lake to try and push the boat. But I couldn't hold it."

Common sense dictates that it's probably not the best idea to try and manually manipulate a 19-foot boat during a storm. But it's true that panic will often cause one to make ill-conceived decisions.

"Why didn't you anchor the boat?" Mom asked.

Jill's face turned beet red.

"I, uh, tossed the anchor overboard without remembering to secure it to the

boat first," she stammered.

Rookie mistake. In fact, Jill made lots of rookie mistakes, which is why this day would forever play in my mind like a classic "Berenstain Bears" boating tale:

**When you're up at the cabin  
when you're out on a boat  
You'd better learn how  
to keep it afloat.**

**For when it comes to boat safety**

**Jill demonstrated  
How bad things can get  
When your ego's inflated.**

**You must have the know-how,  
the map, and the gear.**

**For when you're tossed 'round  
on the water**

**You'll freeze in your fear.**

**You've got to be ready.**

**You cannot be fickle.**

**Or you may find yourself**

**In a bit of a pickle.**

I hope Stan and Jan Berenstain, the original creators of the "Berenstain Bears," would approve of my cautionary ditty, my take on their famous style. The Berenstains certainly made my childhood more enjoyable, as did the cabin. [cl](#)



Christy Heitger-Ewing thinks that if everyone could experience life at a cabin, the world would be a happier place.

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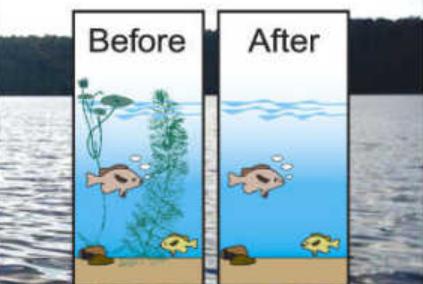
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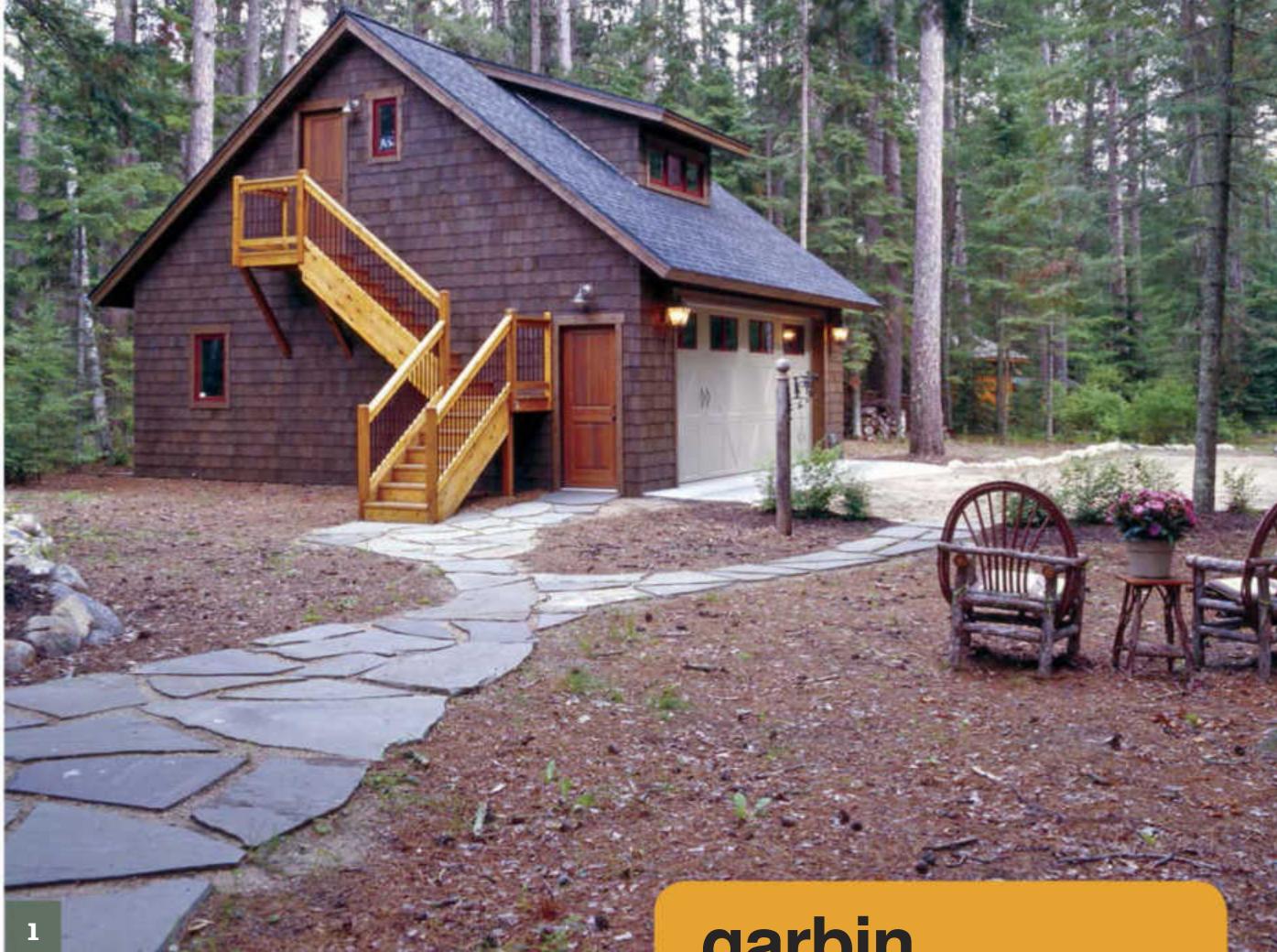
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1

## garbin

garage/cabin: a garage with living space above

# The Garbin

*A great way to add overflow sleeping space* **STORY & PHOTOS BY DALE MULFINGER**

Added sleeping accommodations at your cabin site are great for those special occasions, such as when you're entertaining Aunt Beth and her rambunctious kids or the entire Boy Scout troop. Some cabin owners have extra beds in a bunkhouse or a second small cabin, like I do. But for many, the desired answer for more space is a "garbin" (garage/cabin),

a garage with living space above. If you need a garage anyway, adding a room in the rafter space, aka "in the roof," can be an economical way of supplying a recreational or sleeping space.

### Zoning

Before you get too excited about this opportunity, you need to check with local zoning authorities to see if secondary

living structures are allowed on your site.

The answer may depend on your lot size, septic capacity or setbacks from neighbors, driveways, roads and water. Some codes define living space as "those with wet spaces of bathrooms or kitchen," yet may allow a recreation room. I've designed a few garbins with roof-canopy connections to main structures, in cases where the whole result can qualify as one dwelling.



2

1. A garage with a living/recreational space accessed by the exterior stair.
2. Skylights are a great idea for bringing light into the middle of the garage.
3. Access to a deck extends the living space of a small garage.
4. Shed dormers bring in light and ventilation while providing a versatile living /sleeping space.
5. Built-in beds need only pillows and a pet for a friendly outlook.



3



4



5

## Access/egress

If you're going to use the second-level space for anything other than storage, you'll need a proper, code-satisfying stairway, rather than a pull-down stair.

A proper stairway can be either inside or outside the envelope of the building. An internal stair must be separated from the garage area and lead directly to the exterior. A fire-rated door can be used between the stair and garage as long as it doesn't imply an exit.

An external stair can be an interesting decorative feature of the garage, and when designed with a small deck at the top, it can extend the livability of the attic space.

An egress window is necessary in the attic space, and must be located in any space designated as a bedroom. Windows that meet egress codes are labeled in most window manufacturers' catalogs or on their websites.

## Fire codes

The garage must have a one-hour fire separation from the habitable space above. This usually involves applying gypsum board to both ceiling and wall surfaces of the garage.

If air ducts are employed in the heating or cooling of the living space, these ducts cannot be extended to also serve the garage.

## Plumbing

In cold climates where structures remain heated in winter months, plumbing lines are best kept off exterior walls. Since garages usually only have exterior walls, adding a small mechanical room in the garage can provide an interior plumbing wall.

## Structure

Attic trusses are the most cost-effective means for creating a useful second-level space. Each truss is fabricated with a large center void often equal to half the span of the truss. Collectively these trusses add up to produce a room under the roof with a size equal to half of the garage footprint.

# ROOF PITCH

Useful space in an attic truss is achieved when roof pitches range from 12/12 to 8/12. See the diagram at right.

A 26-foot deep garage with a 12/12 roof, a 1-foot truss heel and a 14-foot-wide attic will have a 5-foot knee wall. Knee walls of 5 feet in height – an average adult's shoulder height – provide useful space for a variety of purposes.

Similarly, a garage with a 8/12 roof, a 2-foot truss heel and a 12-foot-wide attic will also have a 5-foot knee wall.

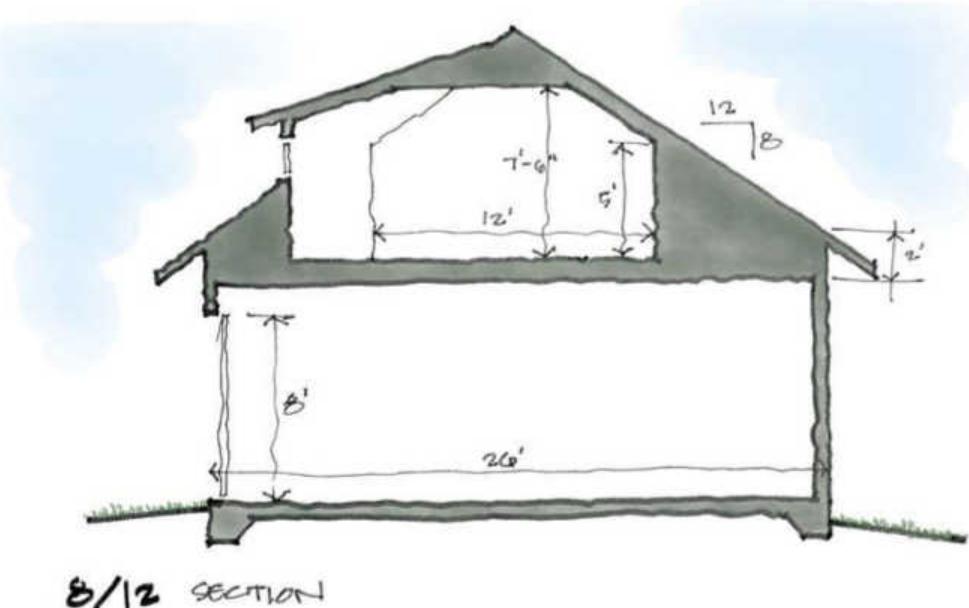
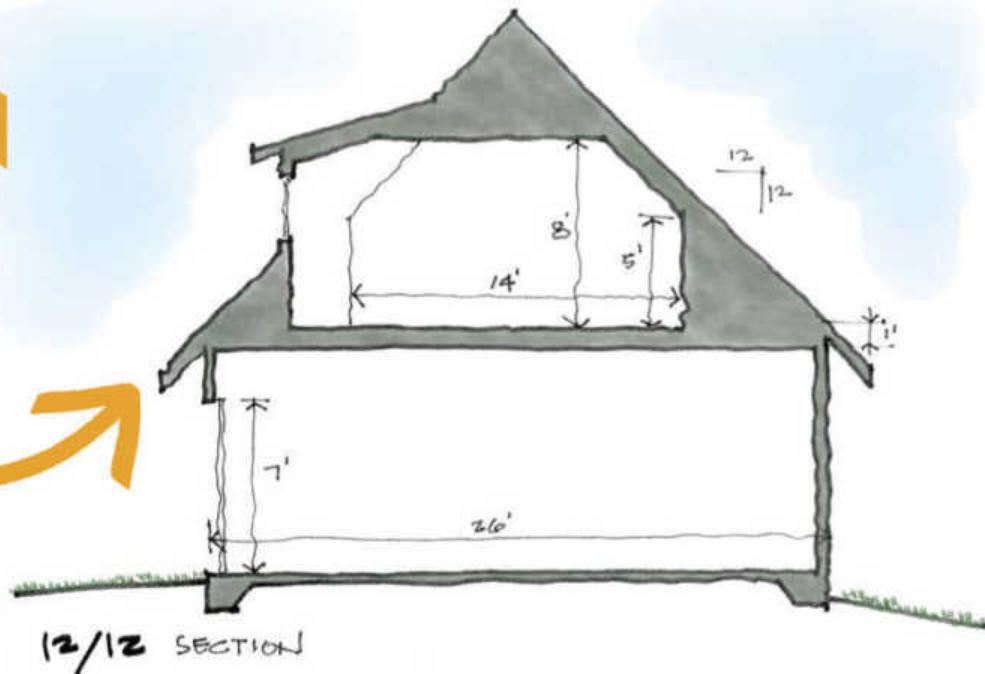
Attic trusses can be interrupted by the use of girder trusses, allowing the addition of dormers that bring light and ventilation into the middle of the room. I prefer shed dormers rather than gable dormers for three reasons: the size of the windows, the ease in framing, and the lower cost in sheathing with either shingles or metal roofing materials.

## Roof orientation

The orientation of the gable ridge is dependent on the location of the stair, which should ascend to near the middle of the roof. Therefore, the stair is usually perpendicular to the roof ridge. In my designs, I usually locate the bottom of the stair in a direct line to the main cabin entry.

## Phasing

If you're thinking about phasing-in a compound of retreat structures, and you're thinking that phase one will be a



garbin, I recommend you put the brakes on that notion. Over the years, I've seen such garbins significantly overbuilt, causing delays in building the main cabin. And rarely were the garbins located on prime sites.

## Size

Our architectural office has designed one-, two-, three-, and even four-car garbins. No matter the final configuration, your garbin can provide a cozy

little garret for children or become a well-developed suite for the luxury accommodation of guests. **CL**



Cabinologist Dale Mulfinger, with Minnesota-based SALA Architects, regularly designs cabins, teaches cabin classes and gives talks on cabin design across North America. He has authored five cabin-centric books.

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Photos by Roger Wade

# Once upon a time

Tucked away in a grove of white pine trees and surrounded by an immaculate garden, this charming cottage looks as if it were plucked from your favorite childhood fairytale. Located in the resort community of Harbor Springs, Mich., the 900-square-foot cottage boasts undulating cedar shingles, intricate stonework and a steeply curved roofline. The curved white oak door, with an intricate spider-web of iron creeping across the leaded glass, accentuates the storybook charm and whimsy. **CL**

**RESOURCES:** Hendricks Architecture ([hendricksarchitect.com](http://hendricksarchitect.com)) and Wentworth Builders ([wentworthbuilders.com](http://wentworthbuilders.com))



Photos courtesy Nathaniel & Kathy Fay

# Off Grid in the Rockies

**LEFT:** Solar panels off the deck railing face southwest. The 45-watt photovoltaic set of panels with regulator is hooked up to two 95-amp-hour deep-cycle batteries. **ABOVE:** The cabin exterior shows full-log construction on the main level above a concrete walk-out basement excavated into the hillside. A large one-car garage offers plenty of protected wood storage space. Snow guards on the metal roof hold snow for insulation. Large windows offer stunning mountain views.

*Finding ways to save energy while enjoying nature* **BY FRAN SIGURDSSON**

**C**all it the luck of the “Draw.” Denverites Nathaniel (Nat) and Kathy Fay started looking for a Rocky Mountain retreat soon after their son was born in 1988. “My wife was the prime mover to purchase land and build a cabin,” recalls Nat. “Her family had a cabin in the mid-’60s near Grand Lake and Lake Granby [Colo.]. Kathy has fond memories of those days and wanted our children to have the same experience.”

The Fays found the perfect getaway in Parsons Draw, a scenic valley in northern Colorado. Ringed by national forests and spectacular peaks, the Draw teems with wildlife and four-season recreational opportunities. In 1995, the couple purchased a 40-acre property on the north face of Independence Mountain.

In 1999, they had a well drilled, a forest-service specification road built, and a building site cleared. The following year, Paul Bormann, president of Bormann-Eitemiller Architects PC in Denver, drew

plans for a 1,500-square-foot log home. Built by Randy Mansker of Walden, Colo., the shell was enclosed by October 2001.

“We’ve been finishing it ever since, a few projects a year,” says Nat. After the shell was closed in, the Fays installed plumbing and a septic tank, added dry wall, ceiling and floors, and decks and railings.

Four miles from the nearest county road, the cabin is off grid due to its remote location. A new propane generator powers the three-quarter-horsepower/220-volt submersible pump (the well is 400 feet deep). When the pump runs, it fills an 80-gallon pressure tank; a valve prevents the water from running back down. The 7500-watt generator also runs power tools, makes showers and washing clothes possible, and recharges two deep-cycle batteries.

Though quieter and easier to start than the cabin’s original gasoline generator, it’s still noisy. “What we wanted was to sit and read, or fix supper without having a generator running, or listening to

## Fact

**Voltage inverters change direct-current (DC) power from a battery or solar panels into alternating current (AC) needed to run appliances.**

the howl of propane lamps at night.”

So, Nat bought a 45-watt solar panel kit, along with a 400-watt voltage inverter and transfer switch. He hooked a 95-amp-hour battery to the inverter, and wired the inverter to the transfer switch. The generator is also wired to the transfer switch.

When they don’t need the generator – say, after showers are done – the Fays switch over to solar. “The silence is astounding after we turn the darn thing off,” laughs Nat. The solar power runs the lighting and allows the Fays to charge cell phones, electronics, and both batteries. Adding a second battery a few years ago allows for more lights to be on at the same time in the evenings. “I did this, anticipating a large number of guests when

# BRIGHT IDEA

How many engineers does it take to replace a light bulb? We don't know, but Nat Fay is sure happy they did. Fay switched over all the lighting in his unplugged cabin – including conventional bulbs in the antler chandelier – to CFLs (compact-fluorescent lights) and LEDs (light-emitting diodes). "They're a fraction of the wattage," he says. "The CFLs and LEDs keep the total usage to well below the 45-watts that the solar panels generate."



New lighting options are a boon for unplugged cabin owners. For starters, CFLs and LEDs produce the same brightness as conventional incandescent bulbs. In addition, bulbs that bear the ENERGY STAR label use 70% to 90% less energy in the process, according to the EPA's ENERGY STAR website. Though the initial cost is higher, CFLs and LEDs last longer, too – as much as 25 times longer for some ENERGY STAR certified brands. And third, CFLs and LEDs don't throw off heat like incandescents do.

Here's how they work:

- Incandescent bulbs create light when electric current heats a metal filament till it glows or "incandesces." But 90% of an incandescent bulb's energy is wasted and released as heat.
- CFLs are miniature versions of the familiar fluorescent tube, but produce a warm light instead of cool white. CFLs light up when current flows between electrodes in a gas-filled tube.
- LED bulbs are actually clusters of tiny "light-emitting diodes." They emit light when a current flows through semiconductor material. With recent advances in technology, LEDs have become more efficient and less expensive.

my sister and her family and my mother come to visit," explains Nat.

Between spring and fall, the couple spends a week or so at a stretch here, communing with nature. Leaving home at 5 a.m., they arrive before noon – plenty of time to unwind after turning on the water and power. Before the snow flies, the Fays can drive right up to the cabin in their pickup truck. High ground-clearance is a must, and in wet weather, four-wheel drive is necessary, too.

Winter is another story. Should the family hanker for a three-day weekend of cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, they have to snowmobile in from the county road. Once they get a fire going in the wood stove (the cabin's central heat source), it takes a day for the cabin to

## Fact

Since 2012, all light bulb packaging bears a government label to help consumers compare brightness (in lumens), estimated yearly energy cost, life-expectancy of the bulb, light appearance, and energy used.

warm up. There's no running water, either. Since the cabin was envisioned as a fair-weather retreat, the water line is not below frost line. To retrofit would be expensive, so the Fays keep five-gallon jugs of drinking water at the cabin for winter getaways.

"It's a little far from Denver," concedes Nat. "But that keeps it cabins and ranches, rather than commuters." Now that's what we call the luck of the draw. **cl**

**Do you have an off-grid retreat? If so, long-time CL contributor Fran Sigurdsson would love to hear from you! If you send us an email at [cabinliving@aimmedia.com](mailto:cabinliving@aimmedia.com), we'll forward it to her Adirondack lake house.**

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All photos courtesy the cabin owners listed

# CABIN PASSION *Personified*

*Cabin retreats are like people in that every one of them has a story. Here are four tales of very different dreams turned into reality*

BY PAUL SULLIVAN

## 1. SEARCHING FOR AN ESTABLISHED LAKE CABIN

### NORTHWESTERN MINNESOTA

**FARMER LOREN ZUTZ** and his wife, Deb, spent many summer vacations in rental cabins in northern Minnesota. When they tired of renting and decided they wanted to buy a place of their own, they searched 10 years for cabins and lake communities they liked.

Loren said, "My accountant told me to buy something at least two hours away from our farm. He said, 'If it's only an hour away, you'll come home early to combine or something.' That was good advice."

The Zutes liked the Bemidji, Minn., area. While vacationing at Rutgers Resort there, they noticed a cabin for sale on the west side of the lake. "We looked at it and told the seller, 'We're just poor dumb farmers. It's more than we can afford.'"

The next summer, the cabin was still for sale. The Zutes asked if they could rent it. "We showed up all set to rent, and the guy said, 'I've decided not to rent it ... But I'm gonna sell it to you today at a price you can afford.'"

Avid snowmobilers (Loren once finished the Winnipeg to St. Paul I-500 snowmobile race 90 seconds out of first place), the Zutes enjoy winter at their cabin. "It can be a howling blizzard out at the farm," says Loren. "In Bemidji, it's a nice peaceful snow."

The Zutes, who have three daughters and one son-in-law, now hold their family Christmas gatherings at the cabin. "Bemidji is such a beautiful area," says Loren. "There's so much to do here now. Even a rodeo."



## 2. BUILDING A MOUNTAIN CABIN

**SEVERAL YEARS AFTER MOVING FROM INDIANA TO COLORADO IN 1977,** Frank and Linda Sullivan received a mailer offering free food and weekend lodging as a builder's bribe to look at lots for sale in Red Feather Lakes, 50 miles from their new home in Ft. Collins, Colo. As lifelong Midwest flatlanders, they were intrigued by the snow-capped mountains and their new environment. "Anyway, it was a free weekend up there," said Frank.

When the Sullivans went into the mountains for the free weekend and to look at building lots 8,600 feet above the plains below, Frank asked about building a cabin at a lower elevation, and 20 miles closer to his home. The builder told him that if he built down there, each morning he'd have to turn over every board looking for rattlesnakes. At 8,600 feet, he wouldn't have to worry about snakes. "Too cold," says the builder.

In the 35 years since the Sullivans have owned their cabin at Red Feather Lakes, they've not seen snakes, but they have enjoyed watching bear, moose, bobcats, lynx, deer, elk and cougars.

The Sullivans' small cabin was basically built in a day. Frank finished the interior himself. "We didn't have any electricity for six years, no neighbors for 10," Frank recalls. "We ditched for water and got it at 20 feet. Unsafe to drink, though. We had to drill through 500 feet of unfractured rock at \$32 a foot to hit good water."

Landscaping efforts also proved to be difficult. "It was open-range (grazing) up there then," Frank says. "I tried to grow some trees and bushes around the cabin. Cattle came through and ate it all."

Frank and Linda thought about enlarging the cabin as their family grew. Now their adult children tell them they like the cozy little cabin just the way it is. The kids and grandkids like to fish and hike, watch the animals, and listen to the resident cougar growl. "Sometimes, we even see it," says Frank.



### 3. PRESERVING A HISTORIC CABIN

**MARNIE MAMMINGA**, her husband Dave, plus Mamminga's three siblings, own a three-season rustic cabin on a chain of lakes near Hayward, Wis. In 1929, Mamminga's grandfather, Erle Oatman, built the cabin of field stones and hand-hewn tamarack logs.

Mamminga, author of "Return to Wake Robin, One cabin in the Heyday of Northwoods Resorts," describes her

grandparents' cabin as, "two bedrooms, a screened porch and a one-butt kitchen." Her grandfather named the cabin "Wake Robin" after the wildflower trillium of that name that thrives in the surrounding woods.

Except for a telephone added in the 1980s, Wake Robin is unchanged. Five generations of Mamminga's family now enjoy the cabin. "It's a place

where the fourth generation, in their 30s now, can get off the grid and relax. There's no TV, no A/C, no Internet. I love the simplicity. Just as my grandfather did."

Marnie has never missed a summer at Wake Robin. "All of my (66) birthdays have been celebrated there. It's such a gathering place to connect with nature. When my brother got



married out on the dock, we had 25 families."

With so many family members using Wake Robin, it can become crowded. Scheduling is required. Marnie and David built a winterized modern cabin across the lake and plan to retire there. "It's only a five-minute boat ride across the lake to Wake Robin," said Marnie. And 87 years into the past.



## 4. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A MAGNET

**BRUCE SMITHSON** was 16 years old when he first saw the point of land on Lake Norway, about an hour west of Ottawa, Canada, where his father would build a cottage. He would rebuild it years later. "The pull of the place has always been there for me," he said. "It's always been a magnet."

On that long ago summer vacation when Smithson was 16, his father Bart noticed a vacant section of lakefront on Lake Norway. Says Bruce, "Mom and Dad had decided they could afford \$500 for a lake lot to build a cabin."

Bart found the owner, who said he'd been thinking about selling some of his 100x100-foot lakefront lots for \$100 each. Bruce recalls: "Dad said, 'That one right on the point. That's a nice lot. How much for that?' The seller agreed yes, was a nice lot. He'd have to get \$150 for it. Dad said, 'OK, I'll take four lots.'

Bart and his wife, Jennie, built a typical '50s lake cabin. "It was dull

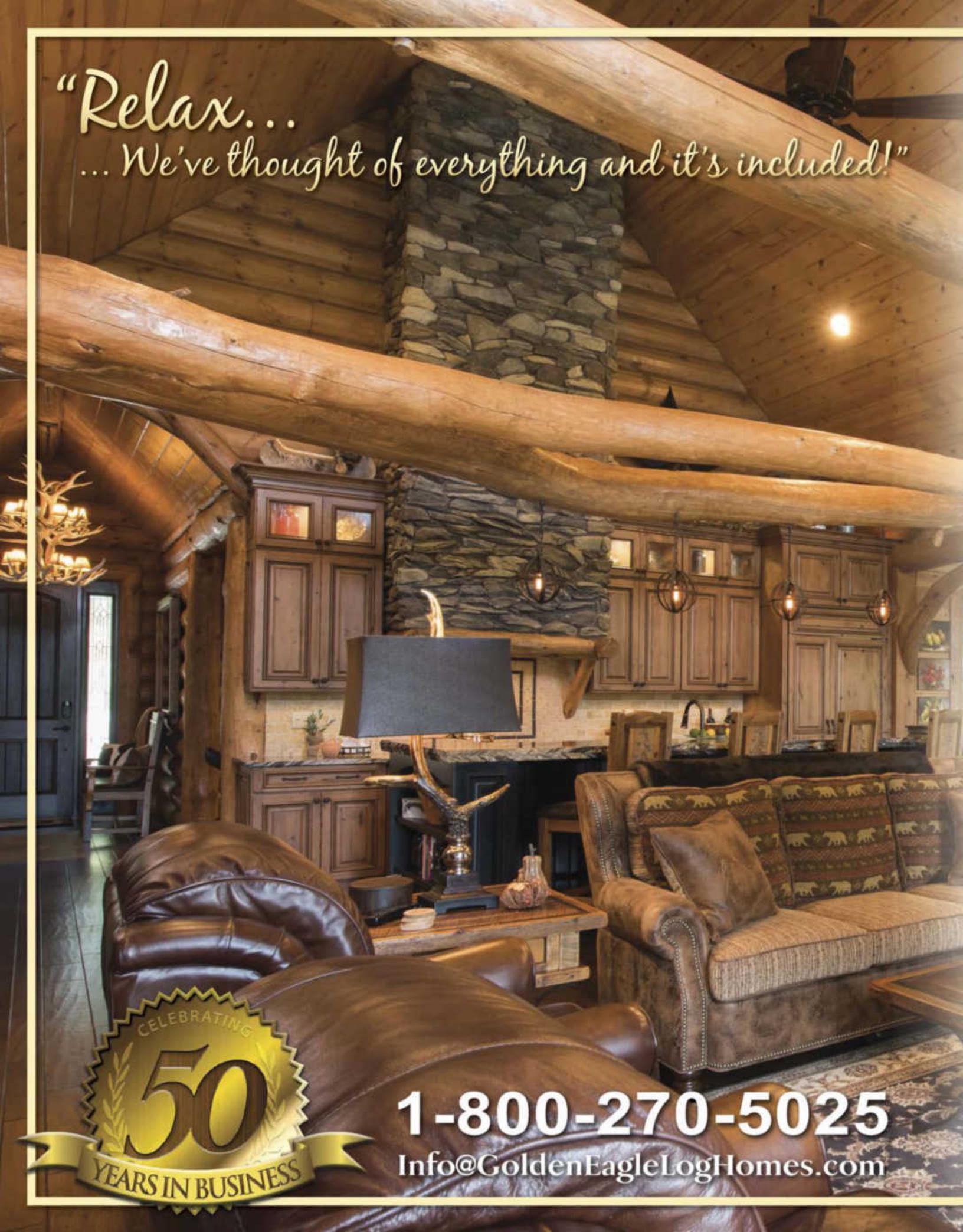
and small," says Bruce. "After Kate and I married, we didn't spend a lot of time there while it was still Mom and Dad's."

For 23 years, the Smithsons owned a large home in suburban Ottawa, where they raised their children, Jeff and Lauren. Bruce had worked his way through college building houses, so after the family cabin passed to him, he set to work rebuilding the dull and dreary old cabin. Today, nine double sliding-glass doors offer stunning views of the lake and bay.

Bruce and Kate have worked in education and traveled around the world. Retired, they now spend their summers at the cabin and their winters in Venice, Fla. Says Bruce, "My thoughts, my outlook and values have always been with the cottage, the family gathering place. I would sell everything else before the cottage." [CL](#)

*A flatlander himself, Paul Sullivan lives and writes from Venice, Fla.*

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# Top 4 Log Home Buying Mistakes to Avoid

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# COZY meets RUSTIC

STORY BY NANCY E. OATES

PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE, COURTESY HEARTHSTONE HOMES  
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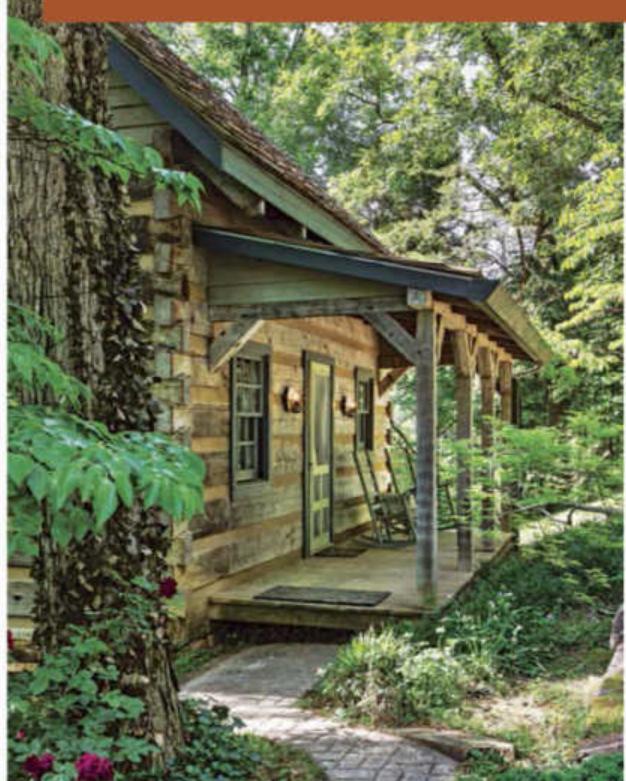
Randy Giles wanted his cabin to seem as though it had been there since the 1800s, and a porch was a key design element. What better way to catch the cooling breezes in summer and expand the living space? A porch need not be large to be functional.





Photo courtesy Randy Giles

ABOVE: The small cabin worked for Randy and Toni Giles even when their family grew from four to six.



*This outdoorsy Tennessee cabin – designed to look like it was built in the 1850s – might be small, but it lives large.*

RESOURCE: Hearthstone Homes, [hearthstonehomes.com](http://hearthstonehomes.com)



THIS PAGE: The modular fireplace has an indoor chimney that serves as a masonry radiator, capturing heat as the smoke wends its way out the roof.

OPPOSITE: One departure from the style of the 1800s – Giles installed a large picture window to bring in the light and outdoor vistas.

**MORE  
ONLINE**

To see more photos of this cabin, go to [www.CabinLivingMag.com/dream-cabins/featured-cabins/cozy-meets-rustic](http://www.CabinLivingMag.com/dream-cabins/featured-cabins/cozy-meets-rustic)



**W**hy would someone who builds cabins for a living want to shoehorn his own large family into a log cabin with only an 18x24 footprint?

In Randy Giles case, chalk it up to stubbornness. "It was an exercise in trying to build small and live small," says Giles, owner of Hearthstone Homes. "That was important to me. I wanted to say, 'Yes, I can build a livable cabin that is this small.'"

### Raising a family, creating memories

And for 15 years, the Giles family made it work, even as the family grew to include the first four of their five children.

Of course, it didn't hurt that the cabin sits on 80 acres beside Douglas Lake in Tennessee. The Giles children grew up on the water and learned to boat at

an early age. Sometimes they spent the night out on the lake in the boat. They camped out in three seasons. A small house creates more motivation for everyone in the family to pursue outdoor activities, Giles found.

"I don't know whether living in a log house makes you feel outdoorsy or whether people who enjoy the outdoors are drawn to cabin living," Giles says. "The kids weren't intent on sleeping in a bed every night."

Because of the small kitchen, the family ate many meals out on the porch, something they relished but might not have done if they'd lived in a larger house.

Giles looks back fondly at the good times the family shared in the cabin. In fact, he and his oldest son both write songs, and Giles said many of his songs originate from the memories they have of life in the cabin on the lake.

### Genesis of the dream

Let's back this story up to the beginning.

Giles grew up in Pennsylvania, and after four years at Purdue University on the plains of Indiana, he hankered to return to gentle tree-covered mountains. In the early 1980s, he came across 80 acres of land overlooking Douglas Lake near Dandridge, Tenn., at a price he could afford. He saved the prime building spot for the dream house he wanted to build someday.

To site the starter home that he would build immediately, he scouted out a site on the cusp of where the land dropped off in a steep descent to the lake. There, in 1985, he constructed his three-story, 1,200-square-foot log cabin on an 18x24 footprint. Giles added a bedroom-and-bath suite in an enclosed loft above the main living area.

And because he built the cabin on a

## INTERIOR DESIGN TIPS FOR RUSTIC RETREATS

Let the materials, craftsmanship and architecture of a unique house take center stage, advises interior designer Rebecca Domin of Chapel Hill, N.C.

**1. KEEP IT UNCLUTTERED.** "To respect a cabin's authenticity, and from a practical standpoint in a small home, avoid adding too many accessories," she says.

**2. LET THE LOCATION SHINE.** Especially for cabins in a beautiful setting, nature can provide much of the décor. Why compete with a beautiful view by adding knick-knacks and other items that draw attention away from the splendor that prompted the homeowners to choose the site originally? To that end, keep window treatments simple.

**3. SIMPLIFY PATTERN CHOICES.** Bring nature in, and let the décor echo the beauty outside, Domin says. The Giles used wood, stone and cotton throughout the home to reflect the cabin's surroundings. Because the antique heart pine adds visual texture, there is little need to introduce other patterns in the textiles. Though classic plaids and checked gingham work well in a cabin, too much pattern can make a room look busy.

**4. ADD TOUCHES OF VARIATION.** Add touches of tradition. A vintage carpet or braided rug would make the cabin look and feel cozy while remaining true to traditional style. An interesting fireplace tool set and a woven basket for holding logs work well to augment hominess.

**5. USE WARM, LIGHT TONES.** Light colors, especially in close areas like bedrooms and hallways, create an illusion of more space by reflecting light. Warm tones make a space more inviting. In larger rooms, include an accent color, such as the terra-cotta red in the dining room that complements the wood beams without overpowering the décor.

**6. FOCUS ON LASTING MATERIALS.** Typically, the materials used to build a cabin are easily livable – no "hands off" signals – and they look even better with the patina of age. Domin recommends bringing in quality furnishings that improve with age and are comfortable.

"Cabins have a nostalgic charm, and family heirlooms and antiques add to that," Domin says. "They add a personal touch and a sense of history to the house."

**7. BE UNIQUE.** But don't be afraid to bring in elements from different time periods to create an eclectic space. "Furnish the rooms with furniture and art that are special to you," she says. "Make each room uniquely yours."

RESOURCE: Vernacular Studio, vstudio3.com





Giles used antique heart pine, recycled from homes built generations ago and deconstructed, for the public area floors, doors and stairways. He chose contemporary pine cabinetry in the bath, to keep the look light and bright.

steep slope, the topography allowed for a walkout basement with windows on three sides. Giles built another bedroom-and-bath suite there. Giles and his wife, Toni, had the top floor, and the children slept in the lower level.

They gathered in the middle, in the main level that encompassed a small kitchen and dining area and the family living space and fireplace with an interior chimney.

Historical connections matter to Giles. He wanted the cabin to look as if it had been on the site for 150 years, though it could not be an exact replica. People were smaller generations ago, so a cabin from that period would have smaller doors, and heating was primitive, resulting in the need for smaller windows. But he paid attention to the height of the cabin, the pitch of the roof, the construction materials, and of course, the porches.

### **Importance of the porch**

“The smaller the house, the more important the porches are,” he says. “Porches create extra living space.”

Every cabin built in the 1800s had at least a porch out front. With an economy of interior space, outdoor living gained importance, and in the summer, a shaded porch in the path of a breeze was a comfortable place to work and rest. The front

porch in Giles’ cabin is only 6 feet wide, authentic to cabins at the time when pioneers were frugal with space and timber.

Giles added a back porch to take advantage of the lake view and the spectacular sunsets. The back porch accommodates a generous dining table, and the family often ate outdoors or used the space for entertaining.

About eight years ago, Giles strayed slightly from strict adherence to reproduction by replacing two small windows that opened onto the back porch with a large section of fixed glass. He cut out some of the logs and reframed the

his customers valued authenticity more than anything. Their décor stemmed from a flintlock rifle hung over the fireplace. But today, cabin designs are more eclectic. People may want the front of the cabin to look like a traditional old log home, but they take greater design liberties with the back of the house, using more glass to make the most of outdoor vistas and allowing more sunshine to brighten the cabin.

Giles experimented with placing the fireplace in the middle of the room, rather than saving space by relegating it to an outside wall. An outside chimney would have

*“A small house has built-in brakes on clutter,”  
Giles says. “Where are you going to walk  
if you have stuff everywhere?”*

section in timber. Now the view across the lake welcomes people as soon as they walk through the front door. The retrofit makes the house feel so much bigger, he adds.

### **Leaning toward eclectic**

Having built so many cabins for customers over the years, Giles has observed a trend toward the eclectic. When he began building in the 1970s,

allowed more living space but would have lost some heat to the outdoors. He challenged himself by installing a modular fireplace with an indoor chimney that served as a masonry radiator, capturing heat as the smoke wended its way out the roof.

“The technology reflected a centuries-old technique used in Northern Europe and Northern Asia of sending the smoke out on a circuitous route to extract heat before it left the house,” Giles says.



Photo courtesy Randy Giles

**ABOVE:** The Giles children grew up on the water. Built on an 80-acre site overlooking Douglas Lake, the cabin lived large in part due to its expansive surroundings.

**RIGHT:** Building on a steep slope created a lower level with windows on three sides, enabling Giles to retain the cabin's small footprint and expand the square footage over three levels.



## Quality materials in a small cabin

What Giles sacrificed in space, he made up for in quality of materials. Because he had less square footage, he could spend more on antique heart pine, and he used it liberally throughout the cabin. The floors, stairs, cabinetry and door came from heart pine harvested from deconstructed homes from generations ago.

"Heart pine is crazy expensive," he says. "But we only had 400 square feet. Living small gave us the opportunity for luxuries

we couldn't have afforded otherwise."

Speaking as a builder, Giles cautions homebuyers to rethink conventional notions of what a house should cost on a per-square-foot basis. A small house has all of the expensive, fixed-cost spaces — a kitchen and baths — and fewer inexpensive, discretionary spaces, like hallways and large rooms, to offset the cost-per-square-foot price. A \$20,000 fireplace will have a greater impact on the cost-per-square-foot of an 800-square-foot house than on a 3,000-square-foot house. But

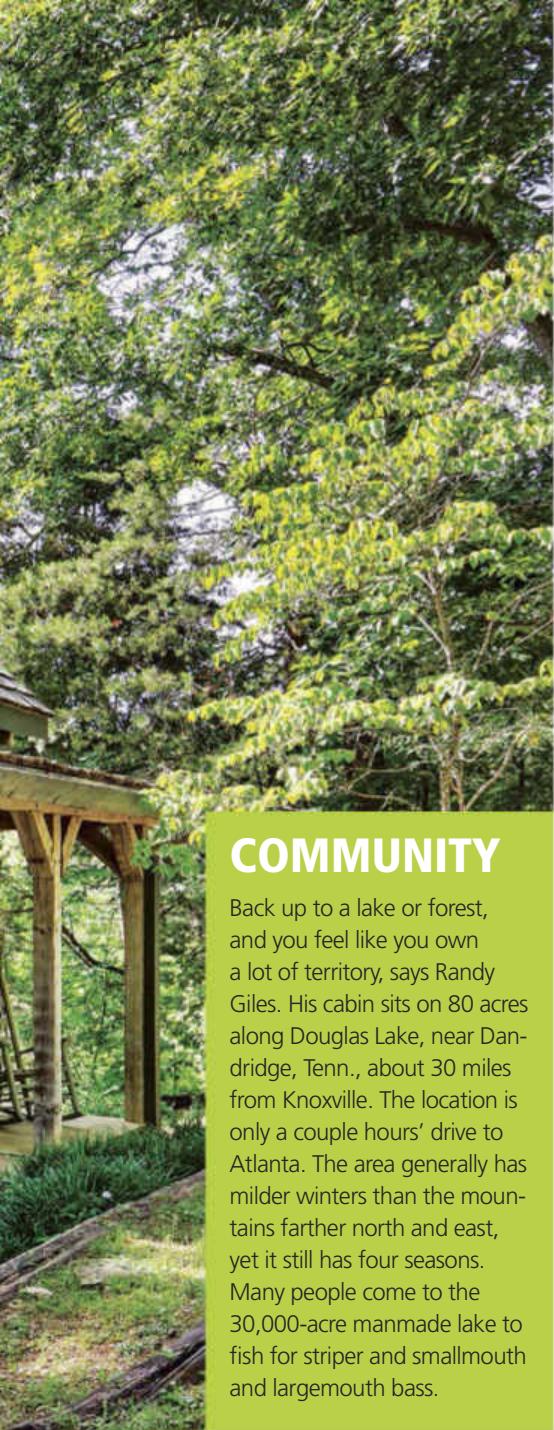
the total cost of a small house may be less.

## Unexpected benefits

Living as a family in a compact space yielded some unexpected benefits: Everyone felt less inclined to buy more things, and more motivated to keep the place tidied up.

"A small house has built-in brakes on clutter," Giles says. "Where are you going to walk if you have stuff everywhere?"

The cabin's efficient design enabled a lot of living in a small package. The Giles family lived in the compact cabin for 15



## COMMUNITY

Back up to a lake or forest, and you feel like you own a lot of territory, says Randy Giles. His cabin sits on 80 acres along Douglas Lake, near Dandridge, Tenn., about 30 miles from Knoxville. The location is only a couple hours' drive to Atlanta. The area generally has milder winters than the mountains farther north and east, yet it still has four seasons. Many people come to the 30,000-acre manmade lake to fish for striped and smallmouth and largemouth bass.

years before Giles built a larger home on the land's premier site. Looking back, Giles is satisfied that his exercise in living small succeeded.

"The small cabin worked amazingly well for an amazingly long time," he says. "A small house is more livable than you might think." **cl**

*Nancy E. Oates writes about cabins and imagines that the pine trees outside her window in Chapel Hill, N.C., screen a lake-front view.*

## CABIN STATS

**Built:** 1985

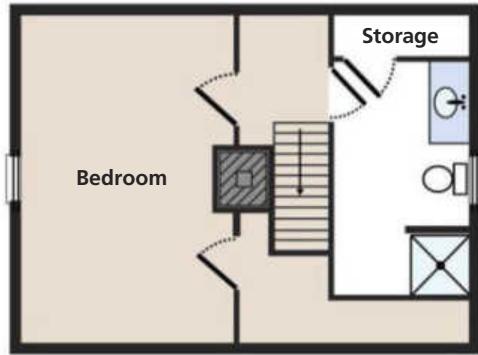
**Location:**

Near Dandridge, Tenn.

**Square feet:** 1,200

**Bedrooms:** 2

**Baths:** 2



UPPER LEVEL

## STRUCTURAL DESIGN & SITING

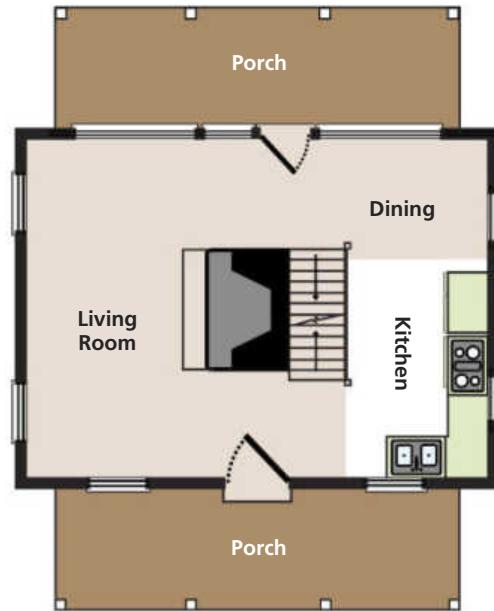
Randy Giles had 80 acres available to him when he chose to build his cabin. Why did he opt to build on a sloping edge? Grading a steep driveway, building retaining walls, finding a suitable area for a septic system, maneuvering a crane along rugged terrain – all of those factors add to the price of construction.

But for Giles, the tradeoff was worth it. For structural purposes, he had to dig a basement anyway. "You're almost forced to create an extra floor," he says – and digging it out of the side of a hill left him with a walk-out lower level with windows on three sides. Outside doors and windows add more value to a home than if the finished space were completely underground.

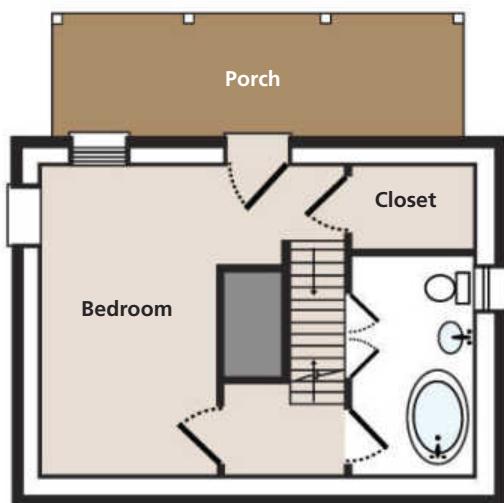
"That turned out to be my least expensive square footage," he says.

And the panorama overlooking the lake was priceless.

"Access to the lake and the view were compensating factors," Giles says. "If you want to live on a spectacular ridge or beside a mountain lake, building on a steep lot may be the only way to do it."



MAIN LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL

cabin dreaming

# LIVING THE simple LIFE

*What the tiny house movement means for cabin enthusiasts*

BY MELISSA MYLCHREEST



**W**hen Andy Laue and Rafael Chacon decided to build a vacation home on their property in Montana, they already had some pretty specific ideas about what they wanted. For starters, they aimed to live as lightly on the landscape as possible, and with respect for the agricultural heritage of the area. They also wanted to be efficient with their use of space; for instance, they wouldn't mind if sleeping quarters, a study nook, and storage all shared the

same room. Plus, they wanted to use as many reclaimed, repurposed, and recycled materials as possible.

It just so happened that Laue and Chacon knew the perfect person to tackle this design challenge: Their friend Charles Finn, who not only builds tiny homes, but has spent years living in structures as small as 100 square feet.

## Not a radical idea

While the idea may sound daunting or drastic – paring down one's living quarters

to the size of an average room in an average American house – the idea really isn't as radical as it might seem, especially for those considering a vacation home.

"To tell you the truth, I think that tiny-house living suits nearly everybody – they just don't know it yet," says Finn. "You realize you don't need as many of the creature comforts, you certainly don't need as many material things, and you grow to enjoy the slower pace and intimacy that it brings."

Finn isn't alone in his passion for tiny living, which is good news for anyone



**LEFT:** One of the benefits of building small is being able to splurge on amenities; the rewards are especially sweet if you can find and afford a site with a great view.

**TOP:** Building two 9x14-foot cabins side by side provides segregated spaces: living and cooking activities in one building, sleeping and studying in the other. A spacious deck connects the two tiny structures and expands livability to the outdoors.

**ABOVE:** Designing for efficiency allows compact spaces to live large.

interested in building their own small home. Online resources and books galore are devoted to the decades-old movement, and small armies of aficionados descend annually on conferences focused solely on tiny houses.

## Expert advice

Ryan Mitchell, managing editor of the website, [TheTinyLife.com](http://TheTinyLife.com), and author of “*Tiny House Living*,” offers pointers and encouragement to the curious. “Most people come to tiny houses for financial

reasons (the majority of tiny-house owners don’t have a mortgage), and then they stay because of the lifestyle that comes with it.”

So, say you’re interested in building a tiny vacation home. Where do you start?

First, consider your needs. “I tell people to put a post-it note on each door in their house,” counsels Mitchell. “And every time they go into that room, write what they did in that room. Do that for two weeks, and suddenly you have a list of the things you actually do in your house.” Then, when you sit down to design your small home,

you’ll be able to tailor the space to reflect your true needs.

Next, spend some time mulling over your priorities. As a vacation retreat, does your home need electricity? Indoor plumbing? Both are viable options, but many tiny-home dwellers opt out of these modern comforts in favor of chopping wood and carrying water. Finn outfits his tiny cabins with wood stoves and oil lamps, and is a firm believer in a well-built, comfortable outhouse.

Consider, too, your aesthetic options.

# BUT ISN'T IT ... CROWDED?

Not necessarily. "People find it cozy and comforting," says tiny-house builder Charles Finn.

Some tips to make your tiny house feel bigger than it is:

- **Skylights and picture windows** not only provide light, but effectively expand the space by – as Chacon puts it – "bringing the outside in."
- **Put in a loft.** This provides a secluded sleeping space, and also divides the space visually.
- **Create an outdoor living space,** such as a deck, porch, or patio, to be used year-round.
- **Be smart about design.** "Form follows function," reminds Mitchell. An efficient, well-designed house will feel roomier than it is.

Both Finn and Mitchell strongly encourage would-be homebuilders to think outside the box. While many mainstream homes are designed to maximize profit and minimize effort on the part of the builder, tiny homes are small enough that creative design is entirely viable. Want a whole wall of windows to capitalize on the view? Go for it. Want a walnut floor or maple ceiling? It's all possible.

## Obstacles to overcome

While tiny homes are a great option for people who want to downsize, to build a small structure while planning a larger one, or to leave options open for relocating to a different spot, it's not a perfect solution. For one, it's difficult to convince banks to carry loans for small houses, since they're not good investments from a resale perspective. For this reason, many tiny-home owners save up and pay for their homes outright, or carry the expenses on credit cards.

Zoning laws also pose a potential hur-

dle. "The issue comes when you look at your municipality's minimum habitable structure definition," says Mitchell. Tiny houses are frequently excluded from these definitions and put tiny-house owners at risk of fines.

## A tiny cabin compound

Ultimately, Chacon and Laue decided to build two tiny homes, parked side by side and connected by a deck. One houses sleeping and study quarters, the other the living room and kitchen. Built of more than 85% recycled and reclaimed material, the micro-cabins measure 9x14 feet each, and together cost less than \$30,000 to build (in 2006).

So, was their foray into small living a success? The answer is a resounding, "Yes." In 2011, the pair gave up their full-sized home in town and moved into their tiny houses full time. **CL**

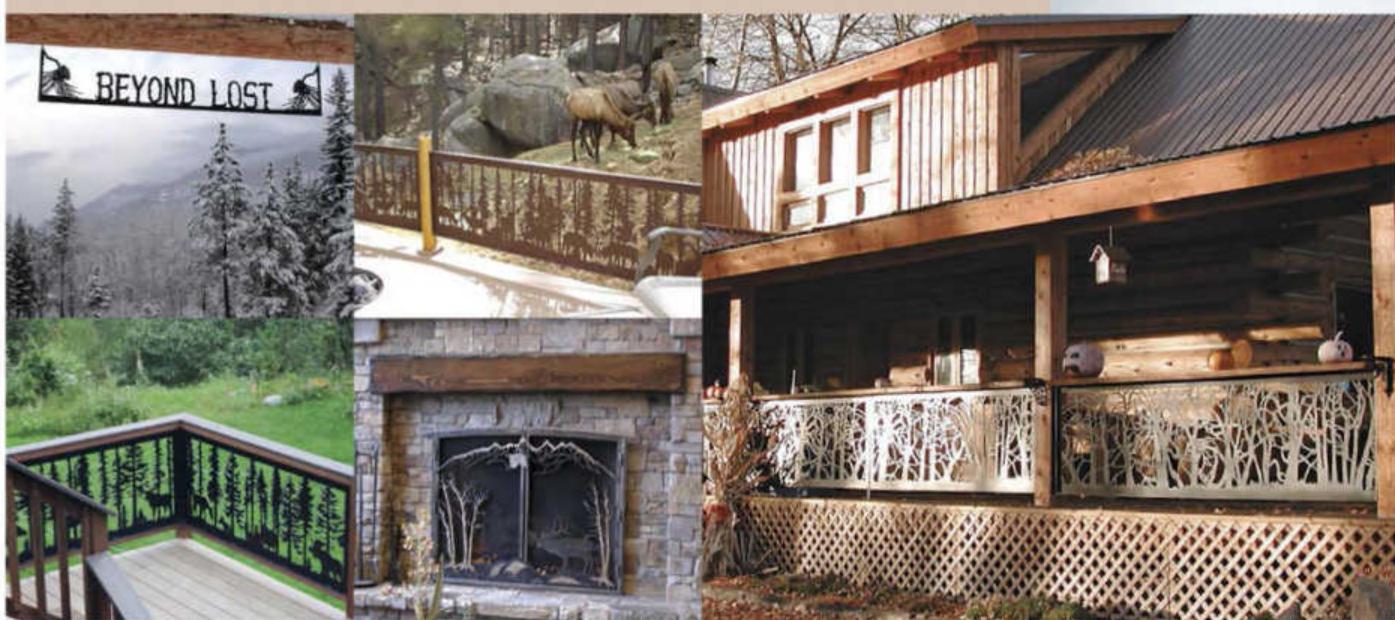
*Melissa Mylchreest is a Montana-based writer with big plans for her own tiny house.*



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## A HOME ON WHEELS

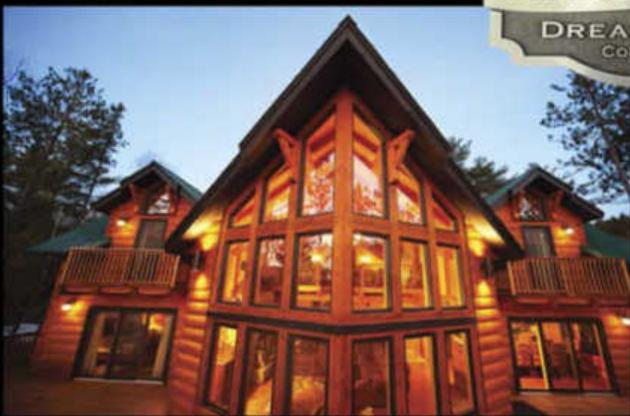
Most tiny homes are built on flatbed trailers, for ease of moving once the builder has completed them. There are ancillary benefits to having a home on wheels, though, especially one that's small enough to reposition with a pickup truck: Decide that the orientation or placement isn't quite right? Tired of the view? Move it! Or, live in your tiny home while building a permanent house on the property, and then repurpose your microcabin as guest quarters, studio, or playhouse.



Top photos courtesy Gauthneau Log Homes; bottom photos by Steve Neidorf, courtesy Escape RV



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# MOZZARELLA & MOONSHINE

*Cabin kitchen too small? Just add a pizza shack!*

BY MICHAEL J. WILKUS, AIA



**Y**ou might be wondering how the headline of this article is tied to *Cabin Living*. Well, it all started with the recommendations of a mutual friend, Brian, and the common bond of living the cabin life.

A few years back, with a goal of one day owning a cabin, Shawn and Lisa Lappen decided to purchase a farmstead on a lake in Northern Minnesota near the town of Walker. The farm included a fine home and the typical outbuildings including a barn, chicken/pheasant coop, well house, and metal storage building.

### **A cabin not designed for entertaining**

The home was a beautifully maintained four-square design from the early 1900s. Shawn and Lisa loved to entertain by hosting family and friends on many weekend escapes to the cabin. But, the design of their vintage home – comprised of a center stairway to the bedrooms, a reception/living room, a small dining room and a small kitchen with a restored wood burning/gas stove – posed difficulties for



# PIZZA TIME



Brian Cornell – a friend of the author's and the cabin owners' – is a frequent guest at the

## MOZZARELLA & MOONSHINE PIZZA SHACK

He shares a list of let's-try-this pizzas that are a bit out of the ordinary, including:

*beaver* SQUIRREL Pheasant  
VENISON **PERCH** ELK SAUSAGE

Brian adds, "some nights are 'BYOF' (bring your own fixin's), where it is a very fun time concocting and sharing an enormous variety of components."



entertaining large groups and challenges for preparing meals for them.

### A gathering place built from acquired treasures

Shawn and Lisa had the vision of creating an additional outbuilding. They wanted the design to stay in character with the farm culture, but they also wanted the space specially designed as a gathering place for family and friends. Plus, this outbuilding would be designed and placed near the home and have sweeping views of the lake.

Since Shawn and Lisa were on a minimal budget plan, they decided to assemble

building components that would eventually shape the design of their new project. The couple became expert treasure hunters as they shopped for building components and architectural treasures by using online resources like Craigslist and browsing garage sales.

Shawn recalls, "The flooring came from a Craigslist ad. Someone had ordered the reclaimed flooring and backed away from the purchase. We drove to southern Minnesota where we bought a pickup full of rustic looking boards. They turned into a gorgeous reclaimed barnwood floor."

Other castoff or secondhand building

**ABOVE:** Cabin owners Shawn and Lisa Lappen were able to build and furnish their Pizza Shack on a minimal budget by acquiring secondhand materials. "Our material collection all started with Craigslist," says Shawn. "We found some amazing windows at a bargain price." The granite slab for the table was bought via an online auction, while the table's bases were made from reclaimed barn beams by Minnesota Barnwood.

**OPPOSITE:** This is one of the many parties that Shawn and Lisa have hosted in their new cabin outbuilding. The variety of pizzas enjoyed by their guests is only limited by their imagination. **Pheasant pizza anyone?**



materials that Shawn and Lisa acquired included doors, windows, roofing, cabinetry, countertops, a sink, wine cooler, refrigerator, and the greatest find of all: a wood-fired pizza oven.

### The design process

With all of their prized potential architectural treasures assembled on their property, the cabin owners had no idea how to start the process. Back to that guy named Brian.

One day, Shawn shared a cold beverage with his cabin neighbor Brian Cornell. While discussing the creative possibilities for the assembly of materials, Brian recommended his friend and fellow cabin living specialist, artist, and architect – yours truly, the author of this story.

We set up a meeting to discuss their vision of what they were calling the “Pizza Shack.” When handed a complete spreadsheet of Shawn and Lisa’s architectural finds, my firm was tasked with designing a building that incorporated the parts or essentially created the sum of the whole.

After several schematic design solutions, plans, elevations, and walk-through 3-D models, Shawn and Lisa settled on the design (see plan this page above right). Shawn said, “We fell in love with the renderings for the shack that included the split stone and shake siding.”

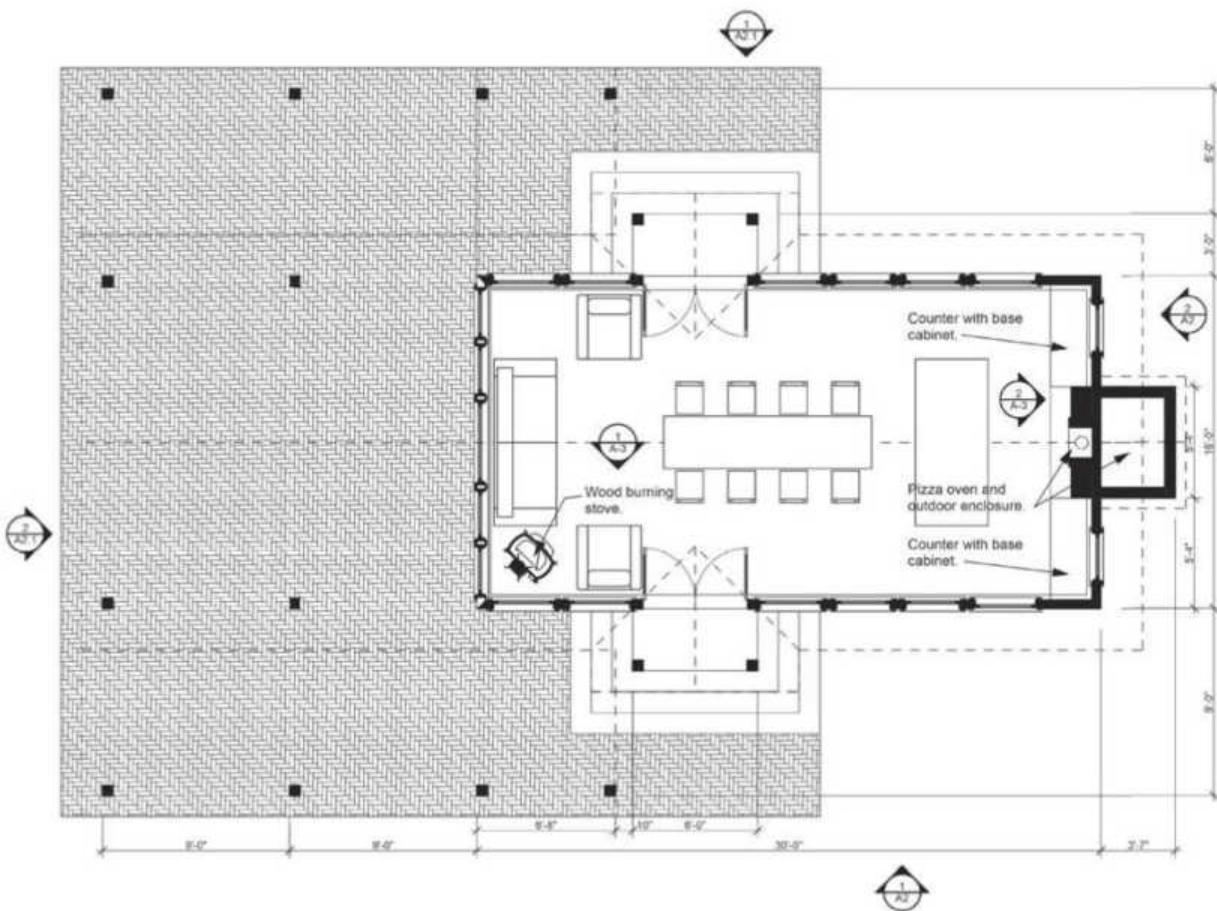
The final plan resulted in the strategic placement of windows, plus adequate space to accommodate a grand, reclaimed custom dining table and a repurposed

granite-topped center island. Everything centered on the main focus of the room: the wood-fired pizza oven.

### The pizza is on!

Shawn and Lisa found an excellent local contractor, Kevin Chase (Chase Construction, Akeley, Minn.), who executed the design and fit the pieces together to create the ultimate Pizza Shack. The Pizza Shack was sited within a wonderful stand of red pine with views of the lake and fantastic sunsets.

You have not lived until you have shared a meal at Shawn and Lisa’s Pizza Shack on the lake. Their meals are all prepared in the wood-fired pizza oven that, at times, reaches 800°F at the center. They



**LEFT:** Shawn and Lisa purchased the brick for the pizza oven through online bidding. The mantel, and the ceiling beams came from Minnesota Barnwood.

**RIGHT:** Shawn and Lisa's project is not quite finished. They are currently collecting supplies so they can add a firepit and a paver path.



can prepare appetizers for the most discerning of food critics, including shrimp scampi, artichoke dip and baked olives, and main courses that include duck, venison, pheasant, and your own custom pizza with the freshest of ingredients. Top off a perfect evening with wood-fired desserts if you have any room left!

Shawn and Lisa can entertain family and friends in large numbers without feeling cramped or confined. Their guests can move out to the covered patio or take in

the incredible views of the stars and moon in a completely dark sky as they wander to the fields or head to the dock on the lake.

Back to the title of this article, "Mozzarella & Moonshine." Shawn and Lisa came to learn more about their century-old property by inviting neighbors to their Pizza Shack. Stories, tales and lore of their property slowly emerged as they entertained. Tales were told that ages ago, a previous owner may have brewed his own moonshine on this land.

It only seemed appropriate that the Pizza Shack would be renamed. It is now Mozzarella & Moonshine! [cl](#)

*Mike Wilkus is the principal of Wilkus Architects, P.A. in Hopkins, Minn. As an architect, Mike enjoys art and architecture, but also cabin living at his place on Bluewater Lake in northern Minnesota. Note: Project credit also goes to Duane Perry, AIA CID, Project Architect at Wilkus Architects.*

## design ideas



**LINE IT UP.** With just 540 total square feet, this island cottage has very little space to spare. The kitchen lines one wall, accented with barnwood paneling. Using floor cabinets only – and avoiding wall-hung cabinetry – allows for storage while keeping the kitchen from overpowering the dining area and the rest of the open living space.

**Designer:** Jessica Helgerson Interior Design,  
[jhinteriordesign.com](http://jhinteriordesign.com)



# SMALL BUT MIGHTY

## INSPIRATION FOR MODEST CABIN & COTTAGE KITCHENS

BY JANICE BREWSTER

Some of your fondest memories at the cabin probably include food – family meals at holidays, s'mores around the fire pit or drinks and appetizers on the deck. But cabin kitchens often need to be small. So how do you get the most function out of a little kitchen? Good design and a careful eye on clutter help.

If you're planning a new kitchen or a remodel, work with a kitchen designer to take advantage of the space you have. A wide range of cabinets is available to help you fit storage into narrow spaces and around appliances.

If you already have a small kitchen that could use some breathing room, take time to inventory your kitchen wares and jettison any duplicates or things that are rarely used. Painting your walls, cabinets or ceiling might also help your kitchen appear larger.

Photo by Lincoln Barbour



### BELLS AND WHISTLES (left)

With a smaller kitchen project, your budget might allow for cabinetry extras like glass doors, a range hood or furniture-style "feet." A small table in the kitchen is a new, old-fashioned idea that can be used to serve meals and as another work surface during food prep.

**Cabinetry:** Yorktowne, [yorktowne-cabinetry.com](http://yorktowne-cabinetry.com)

Photo courtesy Yorktowne Cabinetry



### INTO THE WOODS (right)

Narrow wood planks lining the dropped ceiling and a classic farmhouse sink give this kitchen authentic vintage charm. Plate racks above the sink make tidying up easy and open shelves pair with cabinets to provide additional storage. Hanging a curtain below the sink is an attractive way to cover up hidden storage.

#### Designer:

Our Town Plans, [ourtownplans.com](http://ourtownplans.com)



**NO BIGGER THAN A BREADBOX (above)** In a truly tiny kitchen, it's crucial to put every square inch to work. Shelves hung on the wall, in the corner and over the window make room for spices, utensils and dishes. A wall-mounted magnetic strip keeps knives close at hand. A mirror on the door reflects the light coming from the kitchen area's windows.

**Designer/Builder:** The Tiny Project, [tiny-project.com](http://tiny-project.com)



Photo courtesy Aristokraft Cabinetry

**COMFY AND COZY.** Steal light for your kitchen from adjacent spaces to make it feel more open. Here, windows in the breakfast nook provide a pleasant view from the sink. Storage surrounds the nook table and window seat. This layout puts the cook in the center of family life.

**Cabinetry:**  
Aristokraft  
Cabinetry,  
[aristokraft.com](http://aristokraft.com)



**COTTAGE RE-DO.** Dark floors and ceiling beams contrast with the white paneling and cabinetry in this cottage kitchen. Storage space is expanded outside the kitchen with shallow wall shelves for drinking glasses and a side table that can easily be used as a bar or buffet. The dark base of the island keeps it from looming large.

**Designer:** Designs by Dawn; [lakestreetdesignstudio.com](http://lakestreetdesignstudio.com)

Left: photo courtesy Designs by Dawn; Below: Photo courtesy Elmira Stove Works

### THE SMALL KITCHEN BLUES.

When you have a small space, you can make it special with bright color or whimsical design. Retro robin's-egg blue appliances and range hood (and a complementary tile backsplash) make this cottage kitchen memorable. Not ready to commit to color in appliances? You could choose a bold hue for painted cabinets or bright accessories.

**Appliances:** Northstar, [elmirastoveworks.com](http://elmirastoveworks.com)





Photo by Trent Bell

#### KEEP IT SIMPLE.

When space is tight, simplicity is a virtue. Clean-lined cabinetry with limited hardware and a contemporary peninsula make this compact kitchen look cool, calm and collected. Oversized windows fill the space with light and a view that can be enjoyed from a seat at the counter. **cl**

**Design/builder:**  
Whitten  
Architects,  
[whittenarchitects.com](http://whittenarchitects.com)

# DRAINAGE & EROSION PROBLEMS

# ~~SOLVED~~

*Water is the driving force of all nature* STORY & PHOTOS BY JENNIFER BAKER

**L**eonardo da Vinci's 15th century meme probably wasn't the first thing on Dean and Melissa's minds when they opted for an asphalt driveway at their new lake home. After runoff from spring storms unmercifully hammered the slope of their beautiful shoreline, however, they knew they were in over their heads. They were painfully reminded that "Water IS the driving force of all nature."

I could hear the worry in their voices when they called me. "Why did this happen? What do we do now?" The promise of weekend tranquility was endangered.

They wanted to rekindle the feeling they had two summers ago, when their first walk through the maples resulted in a resounding, "Yes! Let's buy it!" decision.

### **The problem**

I spotted Dean and Melissa's problems as soon as I got out of my car:

- The forest had been aggressively thinned along the steep slope that fringed their shoreline.
- Their freshly poured asphalt driveway was pitched toward the lake, funneling high velocity runoff through a narrow channel lined with riprap and

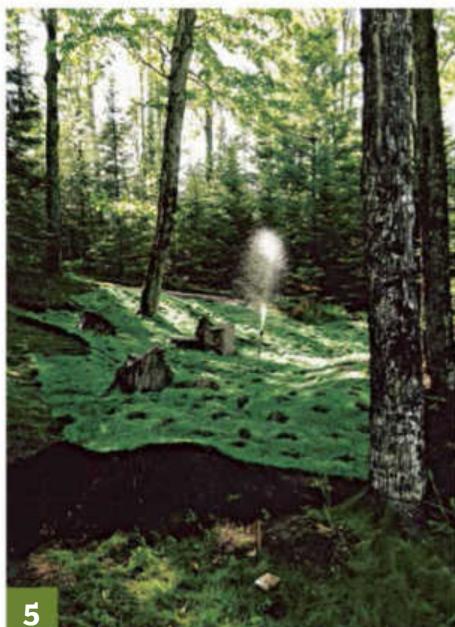
onto the now scantily clad slope.

- The bluegrass turf installed over disturbed areas on the slope was scant at best; no hope of establishment under the continual threat of washout. And, even IF the runoff wasn't an issue, bluegrass pretty much fizzles after germinating in the sandy, acid soils typical of the Wisconsin North Woods.

As we weigh remedies, let's first look closely at what plays out during a thunderstorm, which we all know can pack a violent punch to our landscapes because of the amount and speed of rainwater.

**1****2****3****4**

1. One of the landscapers, Justice, is raking out the soil clumps created by the construction of the rain garden in preparation for native plants.
2. Jobsite life hacks help make the work-day fun. For example, a leftover piece of PVC pipe amplifies iPhone tunes.
3. Colorado Redstone stairs navigate the slope, connecting the deck to the flagstone walkway.
4. Wisconsin granite boulders add character to the rain garden, which will soon be softened by ferns and wildflowers.
5. Photo-degradable erosion mat protects the surface of the rain garden from washing out as the native plants establish.

**5**

Under natural circumstances, this stress is fairly minimal. Picture a bird's-eye view of an intact woodland – your wooded lot prior to development – puffy and green, like a broccoli forest. Now pretend that you're a raindrop careening out of a cumulonimbus cloud. If you're falling from the sky into the tree canopy, you're going to hit the leaves of a maple first, bounce onto the leaves of a serviceberry tree that's about half the size of the maple, drip onto a dogwood shrub that's again half the size of the serviceberry, then to the ferns that blanket the ground. You slowly slide off a fern frond onto

the soil surface, a sponge and your final pervious destination. By the time you've reached the ground, your previous plant interceptors have slowed you down from cheetah to glacial. This slow speed facilitates infiltration, which means that you're absorbed into the soil and any impurities that you may have picked up during your travels are then filtered and broken down by bacteria that live there.

The rain-drop scenario is much simpler with an asphalt driveway. You fall from the same cloud at cheetah speed and SMACK ... you hit the tarmac, an impervious surface, and quickly run off the nearest slope,

no chance of absorption at the source. Not a huge problem unless there's a whole lot of you. Your volume combined with high speeds quickly removes soil from your adjacent hillside, especially if it lacks ground-holding vegetation, resulting in erosion and an even more naked slope.

Adding insult to injury, petroleum hydrocarbons and salt are carried with the storm water running over the surface of the asphalt and deposited into your lake if not intercepted and filtered first.

Yuck. Not good for fish. Or people.

While taking out the asphalt drive and replacing it with gravel was a potential

**1****2****3****4****5**

## STEER CLEAR OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

If you're worried about runoff, work with surfaces that are broken apart to allow water to flow into the ground. Where possible, use crushed stone as a partial to full medium for your driveway or walkways. If you need a more durable surface, work with dry laid pavers, which are stones or pavers installed over a bed of sand and gravel.

TurfStone is a durable dry-laid product that weathers Midwest winters and absorbs runoff. Unlike wet-laid patios, concrete and asphalt surfaces that eventually crack under the pressure of freeze/thaw cycles, the dry-laid process allows for frozen ground to swell and sink with the thaw, eliminating cracks. Filled with either stone aggregates or topsoil and grass, TurfStone absorbs storm water runoff like a champ, which can be a critical element to your plan if you're trying to secure a shoreline alteration permit. TurfStone has a natural look and feel, too; a perfect complement to your cabin.

RESOURCE: Unilock, manufacturer of TurfStone, [unilock.com/products/permeable/turfstone](http://unilock.com/products/permeable/turfstone)

option, Dean and Melissa did love the look of the drive and the promise of less maintenance.

### The solution

Instead, we crafted the following strategies to both slow down and absorb the storm water before it could do more damage.

■ **We installed a rain garden.** At the base of the slope, we created a shallow basin or rain garden designed to temporarily hold and absorb the storm water runoff. The soil excavated from the basin was used to create a lip or berm on the outside edge, further insurance that the water would be temporarily retained. To focus the flow of storm water into

the rain garden, we added a shallow swale connecting the existing riprap channel to the basin. After construction, we top-dressed the basin, berm and swale with an activated organic compost/topsoil blend and blanketed everything with a high velocity, biodegradable erosion mat.

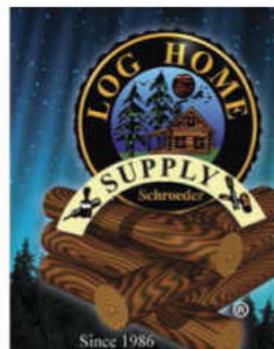
**We used native vegetation instead of bluegrass turf.** Despite forest thinning, the slope was still quite shaded, so we used intact neighboring forests as inspiration for our new plant palette. Installing plants right into the erosion blanket to minimize erosion during establishment, we used a combination of spring ephemerals (trilliums, mayflower) and large drifts of bunchberry, wild ginger and ferns. American fly honeysuckle was massed along the top of the channel and mountain maple, witch hazel and round-leaf dogwood added along the slope as added stabilization.

**We used permeable pavers along the portion of the slope used as a boat launch.** Given the truck traffic along the 12-foot-wide boat launch portion of the slope, we installed a driveway made from permeable pavers over a bed of crushed stone, filling the openings with topsoil and a shade-tolerant fescue turf blend. This provided a durable surface that still allowed for infiltration of storm water runoff.

### The bigger picture

To put Dean and Melissa's story into perspective, the problem of storm water runoff at a remote Midwest lake cabin certainly pales in comparison to a buzzing metropolis, where impervious surfaces such as roads, sidewalks, buildings, cars and houses prevail, deflecting storm water and compromising sometimes relic storm sewer infrastructures. But, as our precious lakes become even more developed, incorporating pervious surfaces within our landscapes should be part of the planning process so we're intercepting the problem before it starts. **cl**

*Jennifer Baker is the owner of Sparrow Land Planning, [www.sparrowlandplanning.com](http://www.sparrowlandplanning.com).*



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# Creative Play WITH **PADDLECRAFT**

Have more fun with your canoe, kayak & SUP **BY DAN ARMITAGE**



**T**here's a reason that paddlecraft represent the fastest-growing category of watercraft across cabin country. Actually, there are several.

Canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) are:

1. Portable;
2. Easy to store and transport;
3. Simple to power, and,
4. Can be launched and enjoyed just about anywhere there's enough water to float the boats and dip a paddle.

How do you and your family use the craft at your cabin? If all you're doing aboard your paddle-powered craft is, well, paddling around, you're missing out. Many enthusiasts have found alternative ways to get more fun out of this recreational pastime. And sometimes, there's not even a paddle involved!

## Canoe transformations

It's no secret that cabin country's original paddlecraft, the canoe, has been drafted into use for activities ranging from fishing and hunting to sailing and even as emergency camping shelter – as a canoe tent – over the eons. Canoes remain popular among hunters who need to approach game quietly, yet may have to pack out literally tons of meat from remote locations if successful. And there are kits available to temporarily transform canoes (and kayaks) into serviceable – and in some case even swift – sailing craft.

However, any fisherman who has ever attempted to angle from a canoe will attest to the fact that trying to fish and keep control of the craft – and your balance – especially if there is any breeze or current to contend with, can be an exercise in frustration.

## Alternative fun with kayaks

That's where kayaks come into play. It's also the reason these boats that offer both lower profile and higher maneuverability have become so popular among anglers. Most kayak manufacturers now offer fishing-specific models in their lineups – complete with electronic fish-finder packages, bait wells, and pedal-power options to allow anglers to keep both hands on the rod and reel. Even kayakers who enjoy only occasional angling from their craft can get by with simply mounting a portable rod holder to the deck of their boats. Permanent flush-mount and portable clamp-on styles are popular and remain out of the way when pursuing other paddlesport activities.

On the other hand, for any fly fisherman who has attempted to cast from the close-to-the-waterline position offered



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Paddle- and pedal-powered canoes and kayaks, like this Hobie model, allow you to access shallow areas and to quietly get up close to wildlife, making them great platforms for nature photography. • Fishing is perhaps the most popular activity enjoyed by people who own kayaks, and manufacturers like Old Town now offer kayaks specially rigged for the sport. • Practicing yoga and crossfit exercises afloat is the latest trend among non-traditional activities enjoyed by owners of SUPs. RAVE's CrossFit line of SUPs offers features like a soft textured foam deck the same size as a yoga mat and a magnetic paddle cradle to hold a paddle in place.



## RESOURCES

A great resource for learning about alternative uses for kayaks, canoes and SUPs, and getting in touch with fellow paddlers to learn and share information, is [wildlandsnetwork.org](http://wildlandsnetwork.org). Other resources include:

- Hobie Cat kayaks and SUPs, [hobiecat.com](http://hobiecat.com)
- Johnson Outdoors canoes and kayaks, [johnsonoutdoors.com](http://johnsonoutdoors.com)
- Grumman Canoes, [marathonboat.com](http://marathonboat.com)
- Pelican International kayaks, [pelicansport.com](http://pelicansport.com)
- RAVE Sports SUPs, [ravesports.com](http://ravesports.com)
- Malibu Kayaks, [malibukayaks.com](http://malibukayaks.com)
- SailboatstoGo sailing kits for canoes and kayaks, [sailboatstogo.com](http://sailboatstogo.com)



by a kayak, only to see their backcasts slap the water behind them, the option of standing has a certain appeal. Ditto anglers of any tackle persuasion who want to see and “read” the water beyond the immediate vicinity of the boat and crave a higher viewing angle. Some kayak designs offer just that: Sponsons or separating transoms or broad beams, flat hulls and stability bars that allow fishermen to stand atop their kayaks.

Surfing is another optional activity that has grown in popularity among coastal kayak enthusiasts. Shorter sit-in and sit-on-top models, kayaks made for white-water use, and specialized models are available to allow paddlers to ride the waves as a way to enjoy using their boats.

Coastal kayakers also use their craft to get to prime snorkeling waters or to use as a floating air-base for diving with scuba gear. There are models designed to accommodate and secure a scuba tank aft of the seat, from which air hoses with breathing regulators lead to kayakers-come-divers

swimming below. Others are designed with extra storage capacity to allow scuba gear to be stowed and then donned and used conventionally when the diver is in the water. Such kayak snorkel-and scuba-bases are especially popular among spear fishermen, underwater photographers, and recreational divers who seek abalone and lobster in near shore shallows.

### SUP options

SUP enthusiasts appreciate the view from a standing position, and it didn't take long before stand-up paddlers who like to fish realized the boards provided excellent flat-water platforms for angling: maneuverable, quiet, and with a shallow draft that allows the boards to access shallow areas that even canoes and kayaks can't navigate.

It also didn't take long before specially designed SUPs rigged for fishing became available. Tournaments are now organized for anglers who want to

compete while casting from the popular paddle-powered boards.

Paddlers who want to give their entire body – and mind – a workout have found that SUPs can provide the perfect platform and setting for practicing yoga, and programs and classes can be found in many areas where SUPs are popular. In fact, some SUP manufacturers are offering boards specifically designed for on-water exercise use.

From wildlife photography to yoga, the alternatives for using and enjoying paddle-powered craft are as wide open as the great outdoors. We'd like to hear about how you, a friend or family member enjoy your SUP, canoe or kayak in a non-traditional manner. Let us know – and send a photo showing your on-water, paddle-powered adventure! [cl](#)

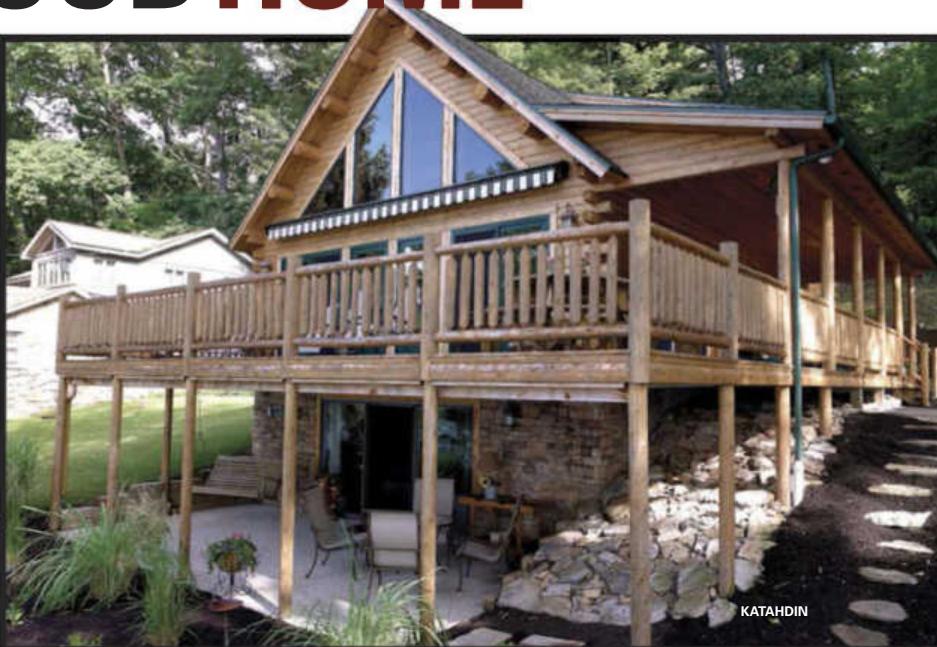
*Dan Armitage is a cabin dweller, frequent contributor, freelance writer and syndicated radio show host ([buckeyesportsman.com](http://buckeyesportsman.com)), who is based in Ohio.*

## custom **WOOD HOME** tours

### A new concept in home planning

Plan your cabin by viewing digital models from top custom wood home manufacturers — without ever leaving the comfort of your home. [Customwoodhomes.com](http://Customwoodhomes.com) is a new online tool that lets you learn about and plan your dream home by providing virtual tours. We've partnered with leading manufacturers to showcase custom log and timber homes on this dynamic, interactive virtual design site.

Come be inspired at  
[CustomWoodHomes.com](http://CustomWoodHomes.com)



**TIMBERBLOCK**  
The revolutionary R-30 insulated log home



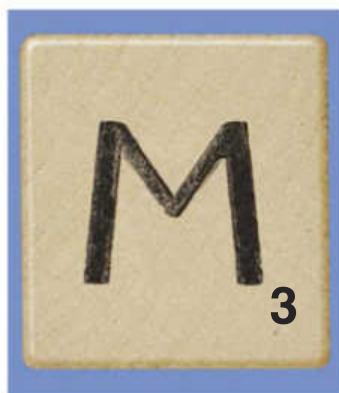
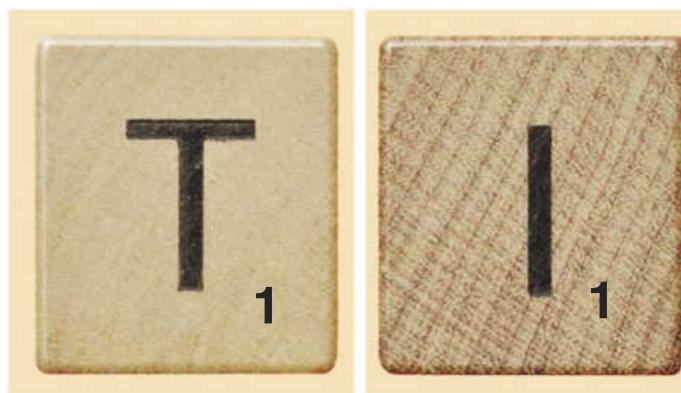
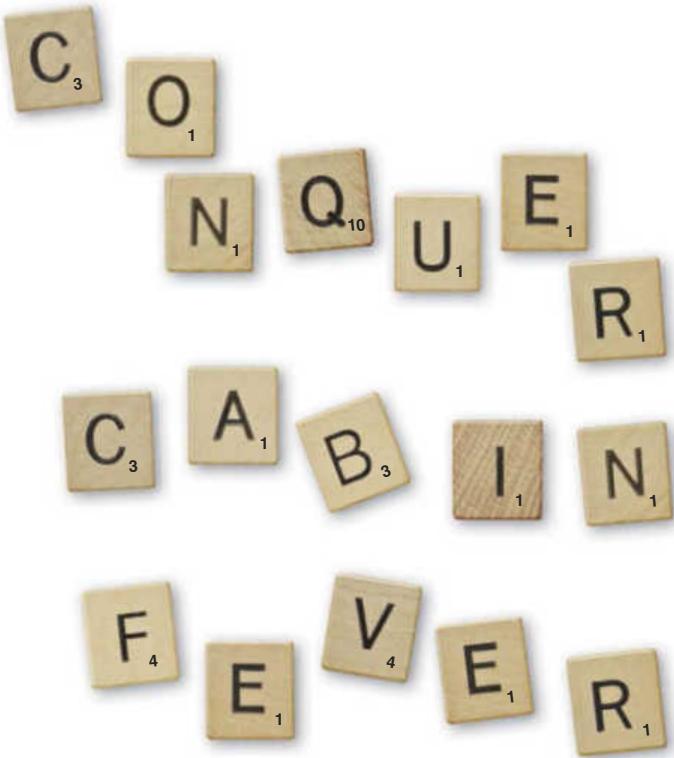
**PERMA-CHINK SYSTEMS, INC.**

**HONEST ABE INC.**  
LOG HOMES

**JIM BARNABY**  
LOG & TIMBER HOMES

**Woodhouse**  
THE TIMBER FRAME COMPANY

**COVENTRY LOG HOMES**



THE SO-CALLED "SPRINGTIME" weather outside is frightful. The rain, the cold, the wind – it's all adding up to an afternoon tucked up all nice and cozy inside your cabin. And whether you've got a place along the Gunflint Trail in Minnesota or in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, that winter weather can clamp a serious damper on your getaway fun.

But it doesn't have to.

Gather the family around the fireplace or the dining room table and play a few rounds of the following games to quickly cure that cabin fever. Not only will they make you forget all about the weather outside, they'll have you creating unforgettable cabin memories.

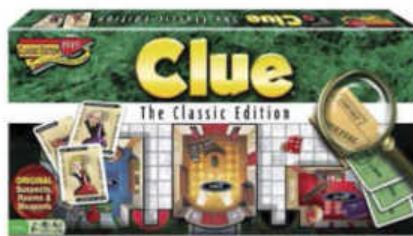


BY  
ANDY  
BENNETT



# CAN'T BEAT A CLASSIC

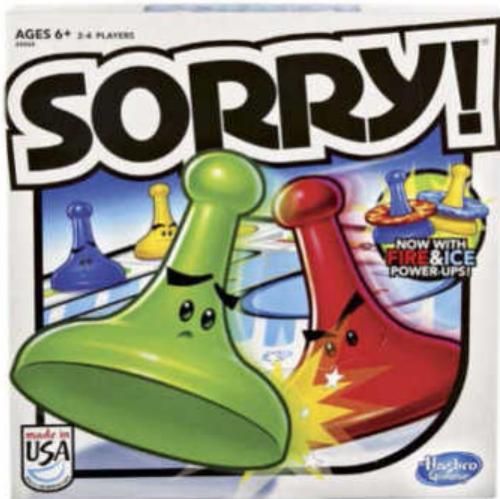
No list of games for indoor cabin fun would be complete without a few classics from the world of board games. Here are a few of my favorites, all of which have been given a recent refresh to keep the games vibrant and vital:



## Clue

(3–6 players, ages 8+)

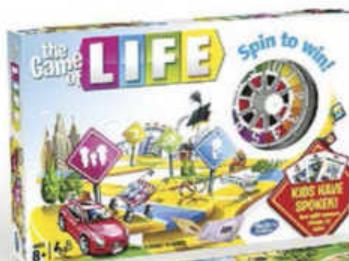
When the wind is howling and the clouds grow dark, what's more fun than solving a murder? Clue is a classic board game for the whole family, and for good reason. It's a blast to play, packs a comfortable amount of scare, and – while it's challenging enough for adults – gameplay is also simple enough that a child as young as 8 can learn to play in a snap. Available in the classic format you probably played as a kid, or in a modern refresh with new rooms, new weapons, new characters, and even a two-sided game board.



## SORRY!

(2–4 players, ages 6+)

Kids will love this game, and adults who played it as kids no doubt have fond memories of sliding, colliding and jumping across the candy-colored game board. And now it comes with "fire" and "ice" power-ups. Freeze your opponents with "ice" or blast ahead with "fire" and revel in the fun to be found in this reinvigorated classic.



## the Game of LIFE

(2–4 players, ages 8+)

Kids of all ages have been spinning that dial for years. And while we know that real life is nowhere near as simple as this board game makes it seem, it's still fun to move your car around that board, pick a career and raise a family. And this board game has received arguably the most needed facelift. It now features new careers chosen by kids.

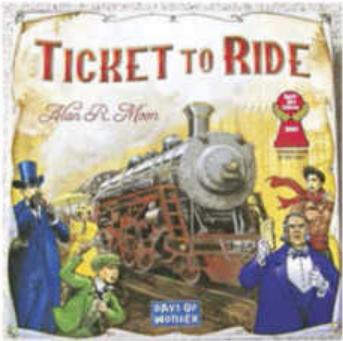
These games are available online at stores like Amazon.com or ToysRUs.com, and at your local Target, Wal-Mart, or independent toy and bookseller.

W<sub>4</sub> H<sub>4</sub> O<sub>1</sub> L<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub>

F<sub>4</sub> A<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub> I<sub>1</sub> L<sub>1</sub> Y<sub>4</sub>

# NEW GAMES ON THE BLOCK

Board game designers are not resting on their laurels. The past decade has seen an influx of new, creative and groundbreaking board games. So put away the Scrabble and Monopoly for the weekend and try out one of these soon-to-be classics.

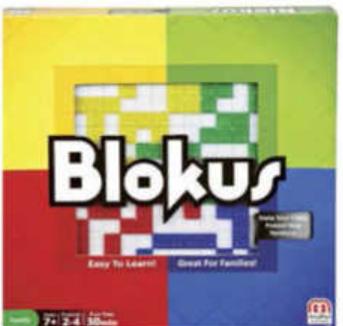


**TICKET TO RIDE** (2–5 players, ages 8+): In this cross-country train adventure board game, you've got seven days to see as many North American cities by train as you can. Collect some of the 225 different train cards to build routes connecting cities across the U.S. The longer the route you connect, the more points you earn. A simple game that takes no more than an hour to play, it has racked up award after award and is quickly earning a place alongside that worn copy

of Battleship at your cabin. It's got tons of replay value and innumerable expansion packs that keep the fun coming.



**PANDEMIC** (2–4 players, ages 10+): Teamwork is the name of this hugely popular game. Work cooperatively to cure 4 disease outbreaks across the globe before humanity is wiped out. Each player is assigned a character with a different specialty, and you must work together against the game to stop the outbreaks in time. Maybe you'll be a scientist who can cure diseases with ease or a dispatcher who's an expert at getting people to where they're needed most. No matter your role, you have a vital part to play in a pulse-pounding, action-packed hour of board-game fun.



**BLOKUS** (2–4 players, ages 7+): Do you like the solitary, abstract-puzzle solving of Tetris? Do you wish you could add some subterfuge from friends and family and move it from the video game screen to the dining room table? Then make room on your game shelf for Blokus, the addictive puzzle game for the whole family. It takes a minute to learn, and about 30 minutes to play, but it has a depth and complexity of strategy that will keep you coming back again and again.

These games are available online at stores like Amazon.com or ToysRUs.com, and at your local Target, Wal-Mart, or independent toy store and bookseller.



## GAME NIGHT

Not every cabin comes complete with a fully stocked game shelf. And not every cabin is close enough to town to make a last-minute trek through wintery weather feasible or reasonable. Sometimes, when it comes to game time at the cabin, you've gotta go MacGyver. Here are our top suggestions for DIY games you can play with stuff every cabin should have.

## Celebrity (4 or more players, ages 6+)

All you need for this one are pieces of paper, pens and a receptacle (think hat or box or bucket or bowl). Each player is handed 10 slips of paper. On each slip they write the name of a famous person (real or fictional).

The only rule is it must be someone that everyone playing would know. Police yourselves on that rule. But you'll kick yourselves if you don't.

Once the slips are filled out, all the names go in the hat or bowl or bucket or box. Divide the players into two teams. Then set a stopwatch or timer on a cell phone for 60 seconds, or just keep a close eye on the cabin clock. Teams alternate turns, and on each turn, a player gets up in front of their team and has 60 seconds to get their team to guess as many celebrities as possible. But here's the catch: Celebrity is played in three rounds and the game gets harder as you go.

In the first round, you can say or do anything but explicitly say the name on the slip of paper. Gesture, sing, dance, give a rhyming clue – anything goes except the name of the celebrity.

In the second round, you can still gesture and give silent clues, but you're only allowed to say two words. That's it. Choose them wisely. If you want to up the difficulty, you can count "Um" and "Uh" and any other noise as a word.

In the final round, no talking is allowed. It's strictly Charades now. But the fun of Celebrity comes in the way the clues build on each other. The way you've gotten your team to guess a name in the first two rounds, often has an unexpected and hilarious way of helping you in the final round. It's a great game for a crowd, and one that will have you in stitches.

## Dictionary Game

(3 or more players, ages 15+)

If you've got a dictionary lying around the cabin (and what good cabin library doesn't?), you've got the makings for a hilarious night of fun.

You'll need at least three players for this, and the more the merrier. Grab some paper and pens and your dictionary and hunker down in your favorite cabin comfy spot. No need for teams with this game.

In each round, one player is the "Definer." The Definer flips through the dictionary and stops on an obscure word. The Definer reads the word aloud and then writes the actual definition on their slip of paper, while the other players come up with their own definition of the word. The Definer collects the definitions and reads them aloud to the group, with each other player then selecting the definition they think is correct.

If no one guesses the correct definition, the Definer scores two points. If you're not the Definer, you get one point each time someone selects your made-up definition as the correct one. It's fast, it's funny and it's easy. That's the cabin-fun trifecta!

**NOTE:** A version of this makes an appearance in Balderdash, a board game that expands on this idea by giving players the chance to come up with fake movie synopses, events that occurred on historical dates, what abbreviations stand for, and more! It's perfect for the embellisher and little-white-liars in your family.



## Telephone Sketch Game

(4 or more players, ages 10+)

Most everyone has played Telephone at some point – on the playground, at a party, at a really boring wedding reception – but you may not have played it like this.

Where the schoolyard classic finds one person whispering a phrase into someone's ear, which then gets passed down a long line, with the final person speaking the phrase aloud and everyone busting a gut over how "My favorite ice cream is rocky road" became "One time I licked a toad."

This game takes that idea and adds your artistic inadequacy to the mix. Fold and cut sheets of paper in half horizontally. Give each player as many slips of paper as there are players. If you want to get fancy, staple the sheets at the top or along the left-hand side to make a little flip book.

Instruct each player to write a common phrase or term like "knuckle sandwich" or "show me the money" on their first slip of paper. Then everyone passes their book to the left. Each player then reads the phrase on their new book, flips to the next blank page and does their best to illustrate that phrase in one minute. Then everyone passes to the left and you have a minute to describe in words the drawing. You continue to pass the books, alternating between drawing and describing until you get your book back.

Then the fun begins, as each player shows their whole book to the group, revealing what phrase they started with, what went wrong along the way, and where things ended up. The goal is not so much to get it right, more to just have a blast.

**NOTE:** There's a version of this you can buy, as well. It's called Teles- trations and is nice for the dry-erase pad and pens, but it's just as much fun to make your own version. [CL](#)

*Andy Bennett is an over-competitive game player from Duluth, Minn. He will pout if he loses.*



Having a  
stash of meals  
in the freezer  
frees up time  
for more  
cabin fun!

(save time)

# MAKE IT AHEAD

(and get ahead)

Stock the cabin freezer  
with grab-and-go meals!

BY LISA READIE MAYER



## CHICKEN PINWHEELS WITH SPINACH & BACON

Makes 4 servings



*Not your average frozen dinner, these pinwheel kabobs get a smoky finish on the grill.*

**W**hat to do on a dreary cabin weekend? Power cook! It's a great way to stock your freezer with nutritious heat-and-eat meals to enjoy all summer.

Freezer cooking involves prepping, assembling and freezing multiple different meals in a single session. The process saves time through efficiency – for instance, you can chop the onions for all the recipes at once, then portion them out assembly-line style as you package each meal for the freezer. It also saves money because you can shop sales and buy in bulk.

When ready to use, meals are defrosted in the refrigerator and cooked as the original recipe intended. The meals retain their freshness and flavor for as much as six months when properly

Opposite: Photo by fotolia.com/ospipovec  
This page: Photo courtesy Once a Month Meals, [www.onceamonthmeals.com](http://www.onceamonthmeals.com)

**4 strips bacon**  
**4 boneless chicken breasts**  
**½ cup chopped fresh spinach**  
**¼ cup shredded fresh basil**  
**2 teaspoons finely minced fresh garlic**

### Prep-day Directions

- Cook bacon in pan until crisp and place on paper towels to drain. When cool, chop cooked bacon and set aside. Arrange chicken breasts on a clean work surface. Using a mallet, pound chicken to  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness. Divide the spinach, basil, garlic and chopped bacon evenly over the four chicken breasts. Roll the chicken tightly, ensuring all the stuffing is kept inside. Wrap each rolled chicken breast individually in plastic wrap. Place in a gallon freezer bag, label and freeze.

### Serving-day Directions

- After thawing, carefully remove plastic wrap from the first piece of chicken without unrolling chicken. Cut the chicken roll into 2-inch pinwheel slices, using a toothpick temporarily, if necessary, to prevent slices from unrolling. Then thread the pinwheel slices on a wooden skewer to create a kabob. Repeat with remaining chicken rolls. Brush kabobs with oil and grill over medium heat, about 6 minutes on each side, or until cooked through.

*Text continues on page 75*

Recipe adapted from Once a Month Meals, [onceamonthmeals.com](http://www.onceamonthmeals.com)

## ROSEMARY DIJON CHICKEN & POTATOES

Busy day? Just pull this satisfying meal from the freezer, thaw, and simmer in the slow cooker.

Makes 4 servings

## more tips

Use gallon-size freezer bags to hold and freeze meals.

They stack nicely, conserve space, and cut down on clean-up.

Label each bag with the name of the dish, cooking instructions and date. You think you'll remember what's inside, but trust us, it's easy to forget.

Leave at least 1 inch of head space in the bag to allow for expansion when freezing.

Let ingredients cool to room temperature before packing and freezing to minimize "freezer burn."



Make  
this one  
in the  
slow  
cooker



1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil  
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper  
3 russet potatoes, peeled and cubed  
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

#### Prep-day Directions

- In a large bowl, whisk together oil, mustard, rosemary, salt and pepper. Add potatoes and chicken and toss to coat evenly. Pour everything into a gallon freezer bag and freeze.

#### Serving-day Directions

- Thaw overnight in the refrigerator. Place thawed contents of bag into a slow cooker. Cook on high 4 hours or low 8 hours.

Recipe & photo courtesy of Ziploc, ziploc.com

frozen and defrosted. "Freezer cooking can give you more time for fun at the cabin," says Tricia Callahan, founder of the blog Once a Month Meals, a resource for freezer-meal

menus, grocery lists, prep plans and recipes. She recommends beginners start out making five recipes, with each doubled so it yields a total of 10 meals. A marathon food-prep session could be a fun cabin

activity, with everyone in on the chopping, dicing, slicing and stirring. Or, as Callahan suggests, do the mess-making at home and transport the frozen meals to the cabin. **cl**



Non-alcoholic ginger beer is a spicier, more intensely flavored version of ginger ale.

## DARK 'N' STORMY

After cooking up a storm, you've earned a cocktail.

- Load a highball glass with ice cubes and almost fill with Gosling's Stormy Ginger Beer. Top with 2 oz Gosling's Black Seal Rum. Garnish with lime.

Recipe & photo courtesy Gosling's, goslingsrum.com

# TELEVISION AT THE CABIN

*Netting off-the-grid reception*

When we first built our somewhat remote cabin, we found it to be a perfect getaway from "the grid." We bought a midsize flat screen TV and DVD player, and when we were socked in for the night, we'd watch a DVD or enjoy the stars and silence. We couldn't even get a cell-phone signal, and that was okay.

Before we knew it, though, we realized there were times when we were



Combined with Slingbox, a Slingplayer app converts a cell phone into a remote control for the TV.

at a disadvantage – weather, news, ball games. We were 45 miles as the crow flies from a major metro area – too far to pick up a broadcast signal, no cable options, and the thought of a satellite-dish subscription for a weekend place seemed silly. Instead we researched the possibility of getting broadcast signals from a digital antenna.

Roughly \$200 later, with an antenna mounted on the roof, we had moderate success. We were limited to three public television channels from the same network, and one broadcast channel from a smaller town closer to the cabin. All was fine until our college alma mater's football season kicked off the following year, and suddenly we were in the hunt for a national title.

Desperate, we priced getting a dish and sports package but couldn't justify it, as we were paying a fairly hefty cable bill at home for those very channels. Streaming TV provided us with a fantastic and fairly affordable solution. While we couldn't get cable at the site, the property could be wired with DSL Internet access. We were able to get a 10 Mbps package for \$35 a month, once an inside phone line (which we'd never had) was wired from the telephone pole for an \$85 installation fee. Since our cabin is a seasonal abode, we have the provider put our DSL service on vacation mode during the winter months, then back into full operation in the spring through autumn.

With an Internet connection a number of options became available to us. Our first purchase was a \$99 Roku box, which connects our TV to streaming web content via Roku channels or web apps. The quality has been very good, and we have access to all free content (weather, news, specialized topics), as well as major cable channels.



The DSL feed and connections are hidden behind the screen; note the Roku box fastened to the bottom of the set to net the best signal from the remote.

Because we had a wide range of channels at our primary home via our cable package, we could register on our Roku to access subscriber content for about a dozen premium channels, including WatchESPN and Big Ten Network. Netflix and Hulu are other options if your tastes lean less toward sports and more toward series or movies, and if you're already a subscriber, watching away from home on a big screen as opposed to your phone or tablet can be appealing.

SlingTV, available using a Slingbox player plus Slingplayer app installation, offers packages of various networks' content that can be played via their channel on a Roku. While we selected the Roku due to the availability of specific apps/channels and its almost idiot-proof interface, Google Chromecast, Amazon Fire TV and Apple TV are other similar options to explore depending on your preferences.

— Maria Armitage

Photos by Dan Armitage

# Reader Tip

## OUTHOUSE CONVERSION

Creatively repurposing an outdoor biffy

We have a lake cabin in northern Minnesota that we've been finishing over the last 10 years. This year, we were ready to dig a well and bring running water into the cabin, a huge luxury compared to the outhouse and our long time practice of hauling water.

The terrain in our area is pine forests and ledge rock, which means there is very little top soil, and wells have to be drilled through solid rock; in our case 325 feet of solid rock.

While planning for the well, we were told our outhouse was too close to the proposed well site and would either have to be capped or moved. There wasn't another good location for the outhouse, so we decided not to move it. We considered turning the outhouse into a tool shed, but decided we wanted a second toilet for times when we have many guests, or in the rare case when indoor plumbing might not be usable.

We researched composting toilets and found the Sun-Mar Compact Electric

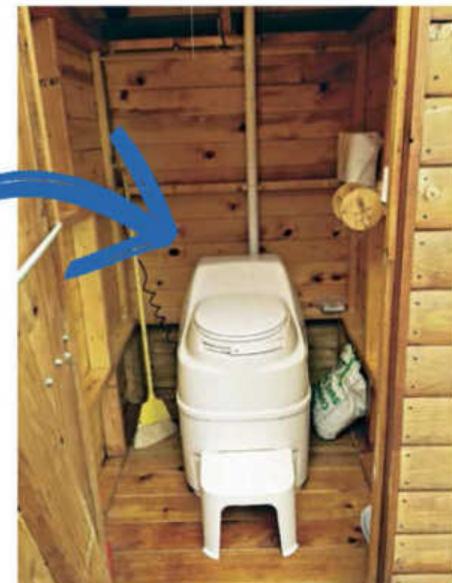
model suited our needs from a capacity perspective. In addition, it's self contained, water-free, easy to winterize and environmentally friendly.

Installation was easy! It involved the following steps. We:

- Removed the outhouse bench and seat.
- Filled in the hole with dirt.
- Extended the floor over the gap.
- Installed a vent stack for the composting toilet.
- Installed a power outlet.
- Put the composting toilet in place.

It wasn't necessary to install a drain because the electric units evaporate all liquids. The new toilet was ready for use after adding Compost Sure, a biologically active mix of hemp and coarse peat moss, and Microbe Mix, a mix of bacteria and enzymes ideal for composting.

We give the composting toilet high



marks for ease of operation and maintenance, cleanliness, and lack of any odor. In addition, some of our visitors and I really like the outdoor toilet experience!

—Mike Portugue

### RESOURCES

Brands of composting toilets include:

- Sun-Mar, sun-mar.com
- Envirolet, envirolet.com
- Nature's Head, natureshead.net

From left: Incinol, Saniflo  
Lettering by Megan Hillman

**GAME of THRONES**

Besides composting toilets, other types of alternative toilets include:

**Incinerating toilets** – These units incinerate waste with electric heat and reduce it to ash.  
One resource: Incinol, incinol.com

**Macerating toilets** – Maybe you want to put an additional bathroom in a space where conventional plumbing is difficult, such as a basement. Saniflo's macerating system allows you to install the toilet on top of finished flooring, eliminating the need to dig up a floor.  
One resource: Saniflo, saniflo.com



# SEPTIC MAINTENANCE

*A tank riser puts a lid on your service bill*

Some cabin owners don't mind spending dollars on updated furnishings or a new outboard motor for their fishing boat. But when it comes to routine maintenance such as periodic septic service, we all want to keep our costs to a minimum. Installing an access riser and lid on your septic tank is one way to shave a few dollars off every pumping service bill.

More local and state health departments are requiring septic inspections or pumping every one to three years to ensure effective wastewater treatment, especially when your cabin is located near a lake or river. When your pumper calls more frequently, you're money ahead providing quick access to the tank rather than having him break out the shovel and start digging.

And bringing that opening to the surface is easier and more affordable than you might think. Your pumping professional will be happy to install the necessary plastic or concrete ring and lid (it saves backbreaking labor) or help you plan to do it yourself. It can be a simple Saturday afternoon project.

Most septic tanks are buried about a foot deep, but sometimes it's as much as 3 feet depending on the grade of your lot. Riser rings are made of concrete or plastic in different heights and are

typically 18 or 24 inches wide to match the access hatch on your tank. Adding the riser and lid will cost \$100 to \$200 for labor and materials if you leave it to the professional. Or you can buy the materials at about half the cost and do it yourself. Bringing the access to the surface will save you a \$35-\$60 digging charge from the pumper on every visit.

These are the steps to add a septic tank riser and lid:

## 1. LOCATE THE TANK.

Follow your sewer pipe 10-12 feet away from the house to find the tank. Your local health department may provide as-built drawings of your septic system. Septic pros use soil probes or a flushable electronic pill and handheld detector to pinpoint the tank lid.

## 2. DIG OUT AROUND THE LID.

Once located, grab a spade and start digging. Allow plenty of room for the riser. Place all the dirt on a tarp next to the hole to keep the area clean.

## 3. DROP IN THE RISER.

A rubber gasket comes with the riser and is placed between the tank top and the riser to prevent water infiltration. You can also add a bead of silicone caulk around the riser.



AeroStream AS-R26 septic tank riser kit, shown with low-profile cover



When you are done installing your septic tank riser, simply cover it with a decorative rock enclosure like this one from Dekorra Rock Enclosures ([dekorraproducts.com](http://dekorraproducts.com)).

## 4. BACKFILL.

Return soil around the lid and carefully tamp down, keeping the lip of the riser flush with the tank top.

## 5. SECURE THE RISER.

Return the concrete cover to the tank opening; then screw the riser lid in place at ground level. Inspect frequently.

*Jim Kneizel writes about septic system maintenance and design for national trade and consumer publications.*

## COMING IN THE APRIL ISSUE

**C'MON ON, ADMIT IT.** You're already daydreaming about summer at the cabin – outdoor living, boating, hiking, even summer projects. Well, the next issue is for you!

### Designed for Outdoor Living

The best-loved cabins connect to the outdoors. We give you tips for:

- Siting your cabin for the best views
- Design principles for well-placed windows
- Well-designed porches, decks and patios

### Special Boating Section!

Springtime is boating time:

- Match the right type of boat to your cabin needs
- Outboard motors – Buying new versus rebuilding your old one
- Control lake weeds around your dock

### PLUS!

- Special recipes: Brunch!
- Hitting the Trail or Take a Hike: Gear up for geocaching
- Accessories to make your ATV a weekend workhorse
- Buying a chainsaw: Must-have features

Cabin Living's April issue goes **on sale March 22**. So you don't miss an issue, subscribe now: [www.CabinLivingMag.com/Subscribe](http://www.CabinLivingMag.com/Subscribe).





## Lavatera

If you want a small, simple cottage with plenty of character and light, look at this one. A one-and-a-half story gabled face opens toward the view, and a set-back porch nestled in the L of the plan offers a spot to enjoy the garden.

The porch, with open rafters and nonfading translucent roofing, is bright even on a cloudy day. Windows on three sides of the vaulted living room fill the space with light throughout the day, and in the evening, a wood or gas stove warms the space.

In the “prow” of the cottage is an eating alcove opening to views all around. The kitchen also looks out toward the view from the sink, and through an interior opening into the main room.

Toward the back of the cottage is a bedroom with a bay window, which ideally sited, gives the room a more secluded view. And above is a loft, which can be used as a study, media space, or sleeping room.

### plan features

**Dimensions (w x d):** 29x39 ft.

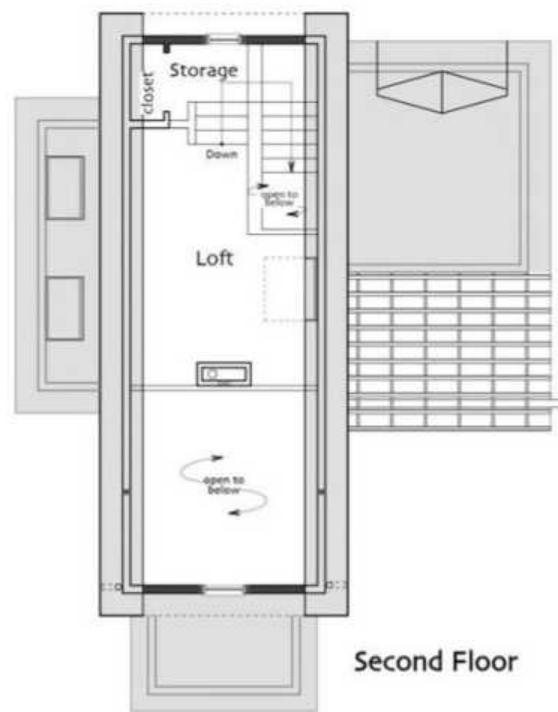
**Bedrooms:** 1 | **Baths:** 1

**Total square feet:** 881 | **Main level:** 684 | **Loft:** 197

**Foundation:** crawlspace

**Design, plans and renderings:** This is a GoodFit plan designed by Ross Chapin Architects

**For more info:** [rosschapin.com/plans/cottages/lavatera/](http://rosschapin.com/plans/cottages/lavatera/)



# floor plans



## PATAK

2,075 square feet | 3 bedrooms | 2 1/2 baths

The Patak is a traditional chalet style where a prow roof is nicely punctuated by a dressed up front shed dormer. Outside, a porch extends along the front of the home and is joined to the deck on the side. Perfect for a lot with a view, the soaring cathedral ceiling is banked with windows bringing Mother Nature in.



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## Lake Geneva

**Bedroom Up: 1** **Baths Up: 1 1/2**

**Bedroom Down: 2** **Bath Down 1**

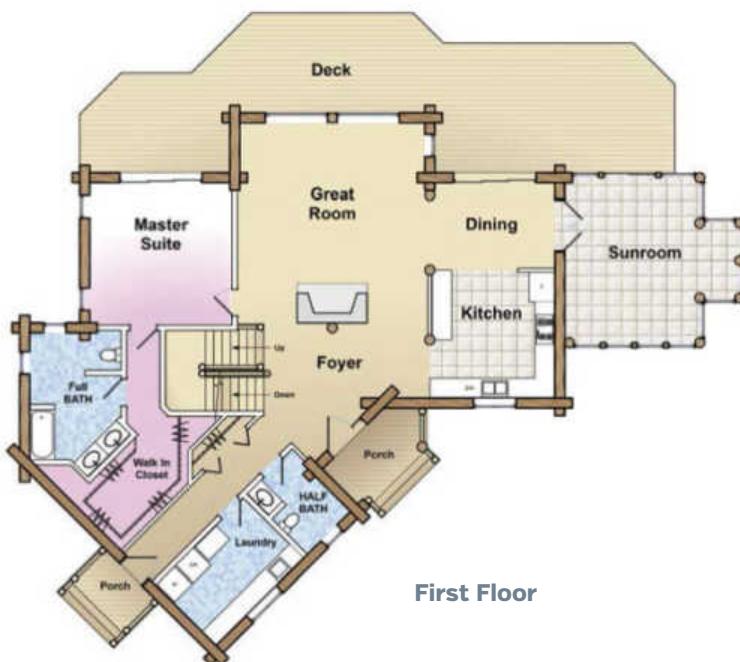
**Optional: Garage**

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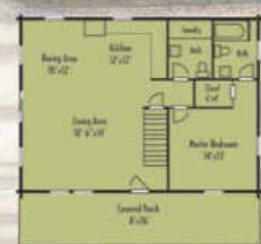
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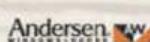
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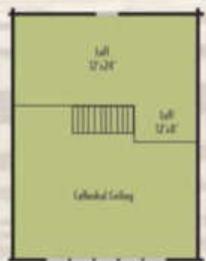
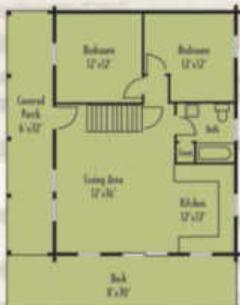


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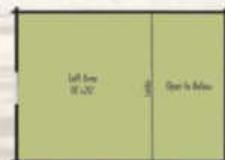
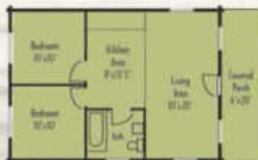


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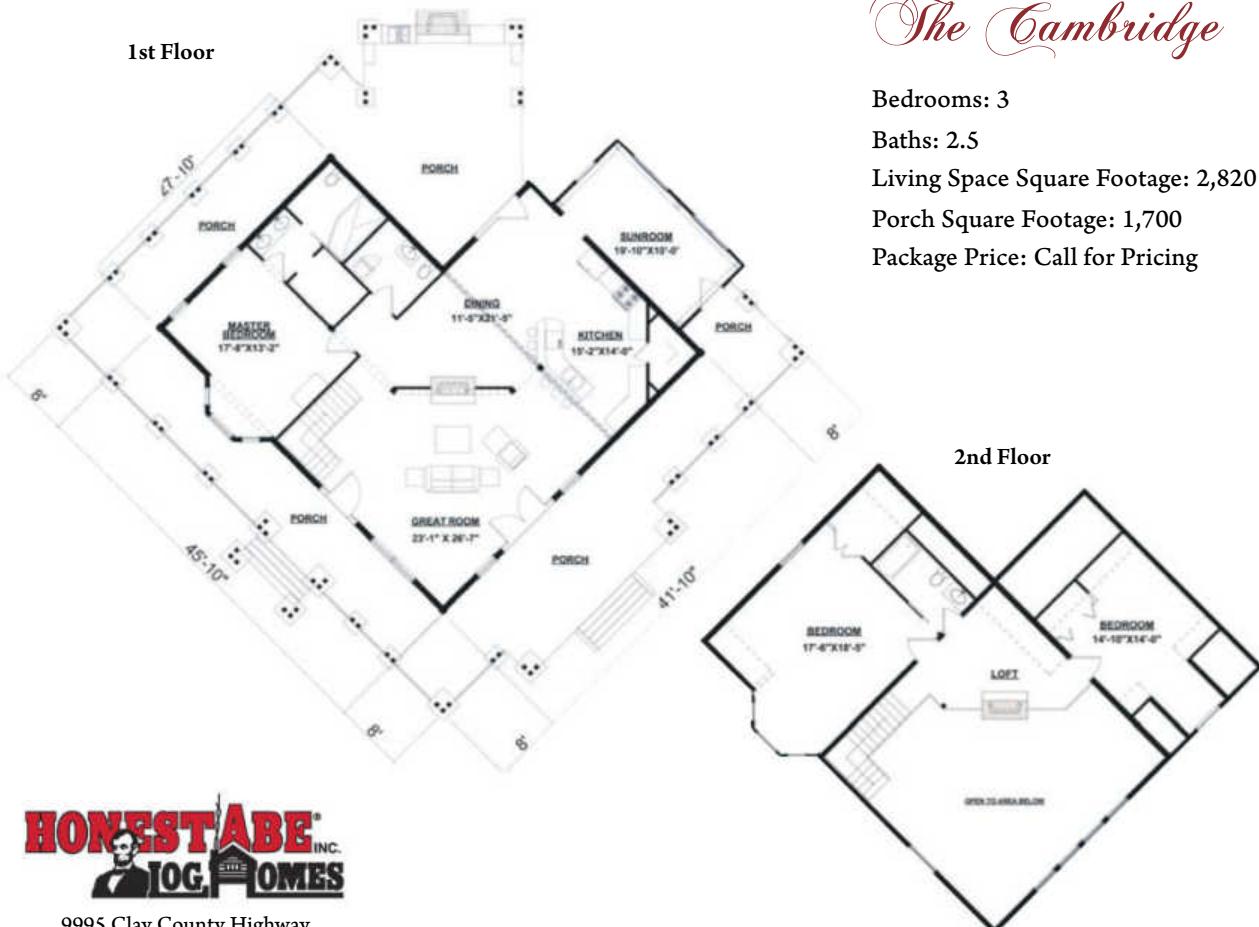
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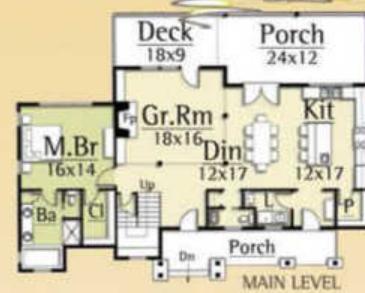
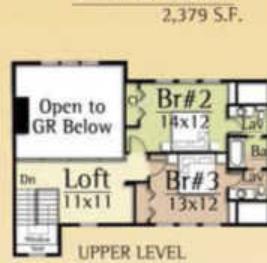
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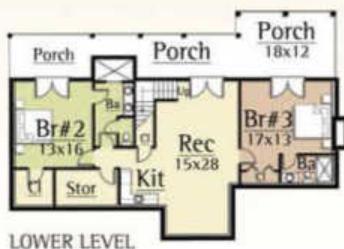
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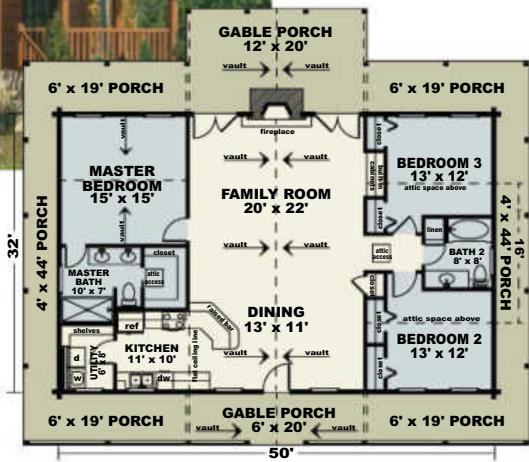
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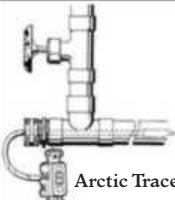
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## cabin capers

For many cabin enthusiasts, spring is a time to anticipate the fun we'll have at the cabin come summer, and a time to relish memories of summers past.

Looking back, it was one of the best summers of my life. I was 13, and I learned to sail.

Rob and I had been best friends since grade school. The summer before we started junior high, he asked me if I'd like to spend a few weeks at his family's lake cottage in Michigan. My parents agreed; I packed a duffle bag, and we were on our way.

The cabin had been in Rob's family for decades and had been beautifully taken care of over the years. It had a big stone fireplace, and a sunporch with a spectacular view of the water. The cabin was set back from the lake in a small cove, so there was plenty of room to swim at the end of the dock.

The best part of the summer was our discovery of a Sunfish sailboat tucked behind the cabin, a bit forlorn, resting upside-down on sawhorses. Rob's dad helped us put it in the water, and after retrieving its sail and hardware from the boathouse, he patiently showed us how to rig it and explained how things worked.

If you're unfamiliar with the Sunfish, it's easily one of the best recreational sailboats ever designed. Introduced in the early 1950s, the Sunfish is still in production, its design virtually unchanged. It's small (a little more than 13 feet long) and lightweight, and although it holds two passengers, they sit on it much more than in it. Ask a toddler to draw a sailboat, and the result will bear a striking resemblance to the Sunfish. And that's not a bad thing.

The Sunfish is deceptively simple. It's wonderfully forgiving for beginning sailors, yet it still provides plenty of challenges (and speed) in more experienced hands.

We couldn't have asked for a better lake to learn to sail on. It was long and shallow, and largely free of powerboats during the week. Rob and I started out slowly, taking turns at the tiller as our skills improved. I believe we switched places after one (or both) of us ended up overboard, bobbing in our lifejackets.

By the end of the summer, we were really getting the most out of the little boat. The thrill of going fast was easily our priority, and we got good at it, anticipating each other's moves and learning just how far we could haul in the sail without

dumping the boat. Without realizing it, we also learned the more important skills of handling a boat smoothly and safely.

Not long after that summer ended my family moved away, and Rob and I eventually lost touch with each other. The summers that followed were filled with part-time jobs, driver-education lessons, and other increasingly important activities and events.

We didn't realize it at the time, but that summer with the Sunfish was probably the last "wide-open" summer either of us would have. It was decades ago, but I'll never forget the feeling of starting those warm summer days with the wind filling the sail and the sound of the water racing against the hull. **CL**

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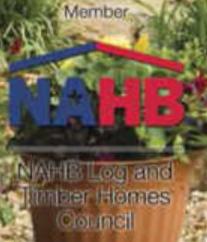
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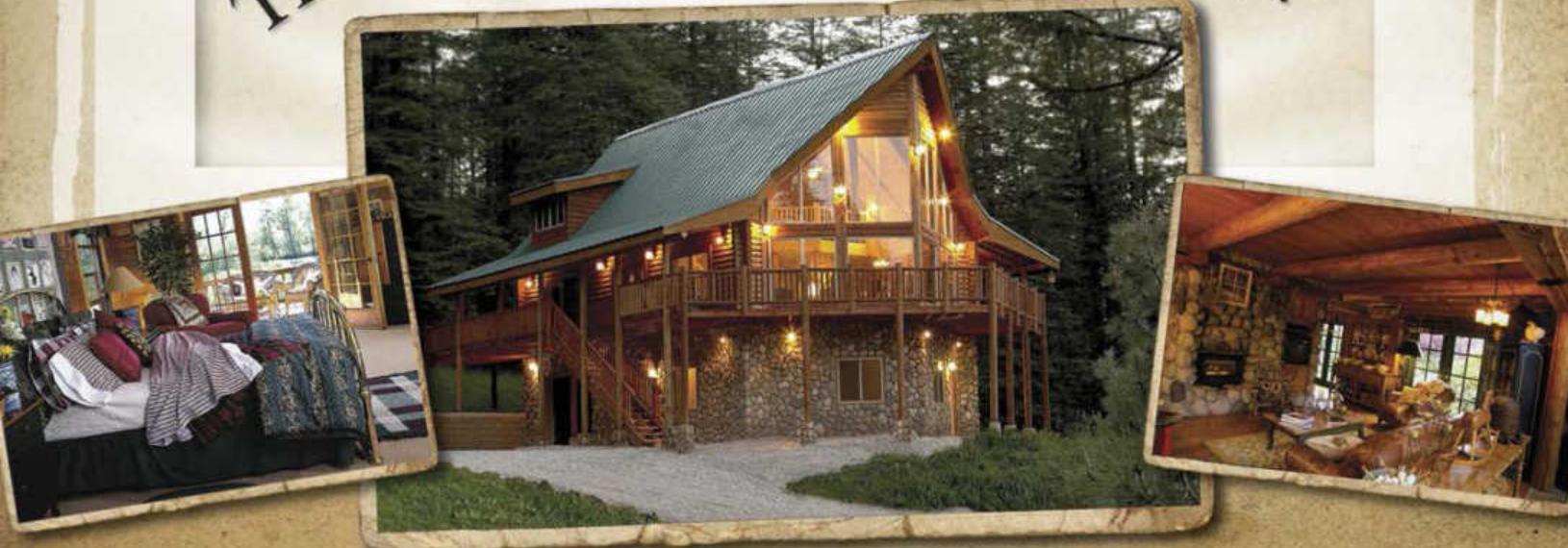
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